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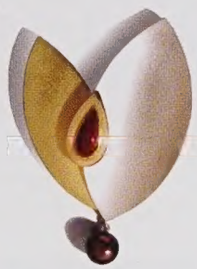

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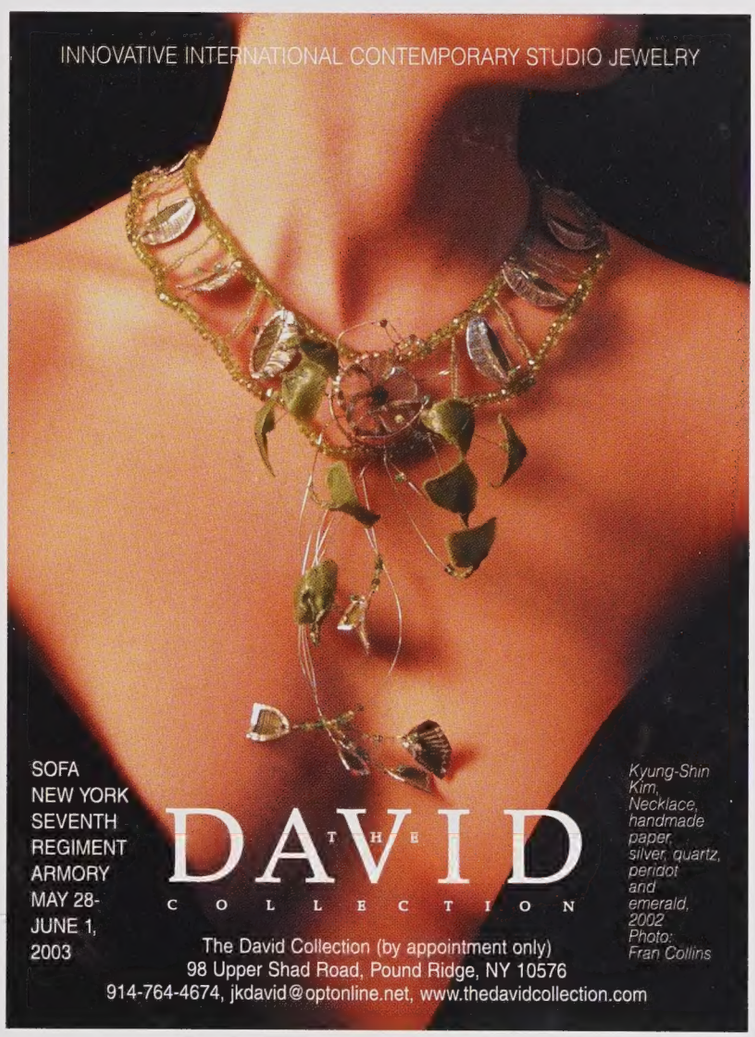
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Kyung-Shin Kim, Necklace, handmade paper, silver, quartz, peridot and emerald, 2002 Photo: Fran Collins
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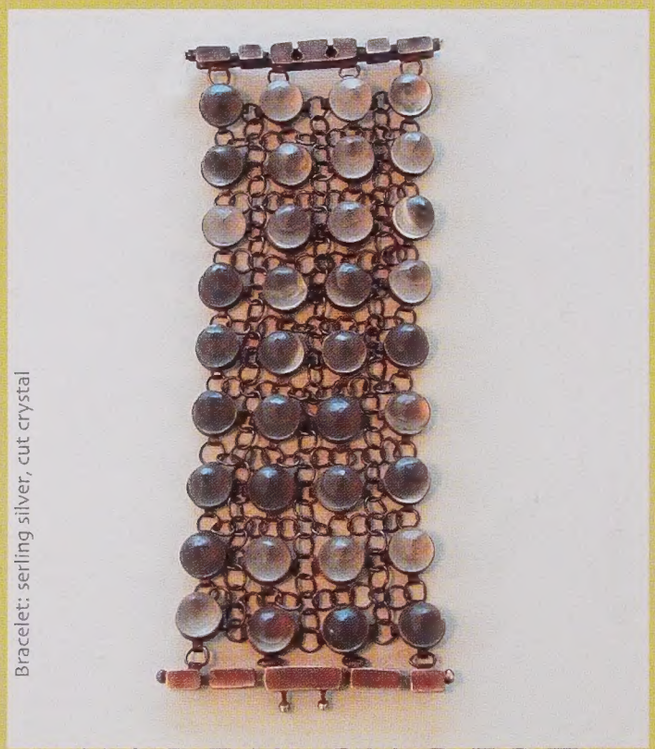

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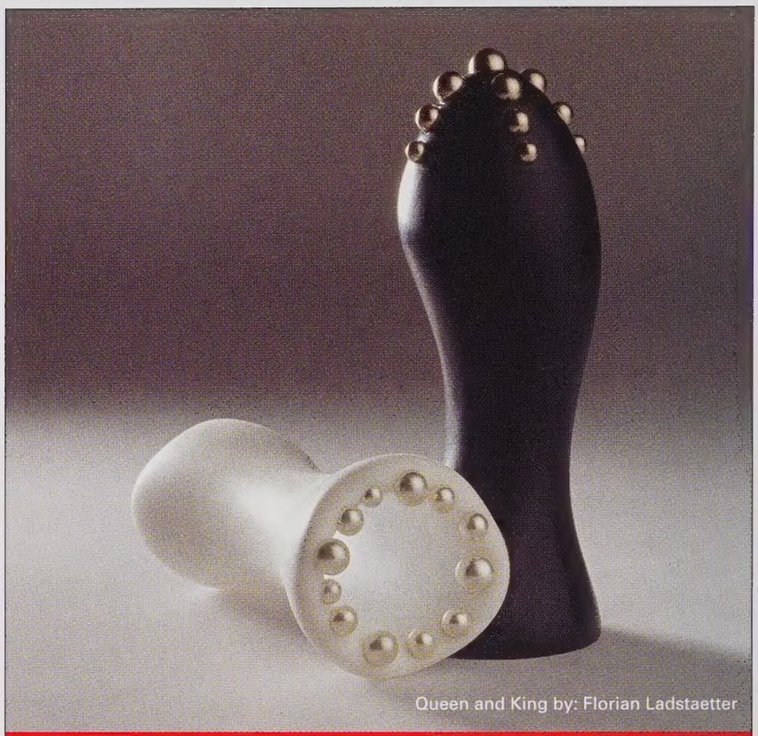

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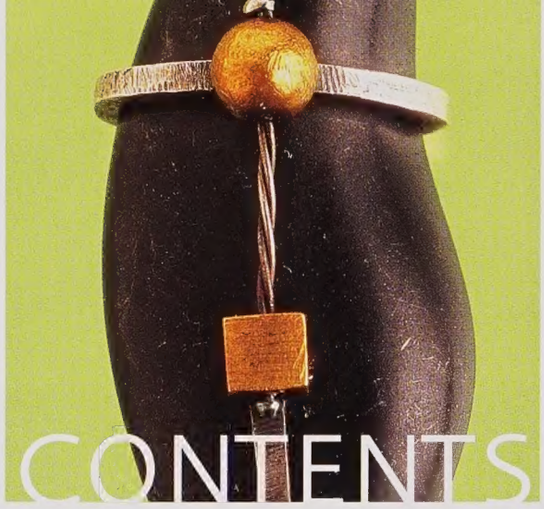

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Thomas Mann
Stone Fetish Necklace, 1996
silver, brass, bronze, iron wire, stone
75 x 3"
Photo: Sara Essex

Jennifer Kellogg
Flower Necklace, 1998
sterling silver, blue topaz, flowers
length 18"

Sarah Perkins
Calabash Beggar's Bowl, 2001
copper, enamel
3 x 6 1/2 x 7"

cover
Thomas Mann
Amoeboid #3 (brooch), 2002
silver, brass, aluminum, paint, micarta
3 x 4 1/2"
Photo: Will Crocker

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FROM THE EDITOR

SUZANNE RAMLJAK

Attraction is an intrinsic property of most adornment, and decorative arts have traditionally strived to be inviting, not repellent. This basic tendency is increasingly being subverted by contemporary metalsmiths, who are creating works that elicit a ripe balance between enticement and aversion.

This two-step of bait and repel is knowingly staged in the recent enamel work of Sarah Perkins, featured in this issue. Her prickly "Triple Cups," in particular, tempt us with their luscious candy-like surfaces, only to rebuff our advances with sharp bristling wires. As Perkins affirms, her unorthodox treatment of enamel aims for "a tension rather than ugliness, enough to show that for me *pretty* is a dirty word."

Yuyen Chang's work, showcased in "Observations," is similarly calculated to be both alluring and off-putting, arousing desire and disgust. Her works are a cross between a bauble and a boil, as Kate Hensler Fogarty describes, and "play on our innate attraction to jewelry, its invitation to gaze, and our equally human repulsion from physical deformities: scares, growths, cysts, wounds."

The historical role of jewelry as a charm or amulet—a means of attracting good fortune or warding off evil—reemerges in works in the "Small Wonders" article on aromatic adornment. These elaborately wrought containers at once beckon the beholder near, while protecting both the fragrant substances they harbor as well as the wearer, who is enveloped in a comforting aura of scent.

Opposites attract and repel in the work of Thomas Mann. In yin-yang compositions such as *Amoeboid #3* (on our cover), the skewered elements are restrained in a metal frame, appearing to resist each other like magnets with incompatible force fields. Mann's recent series of container pins extends the tension outward to the viewer. The mysterious contents of these works draw us close and engage our imagination, but the lack of any narrative or context turns us back on ourselves. Like the best art, it remains satisfyingly unresolved....

SR

METALSMITH

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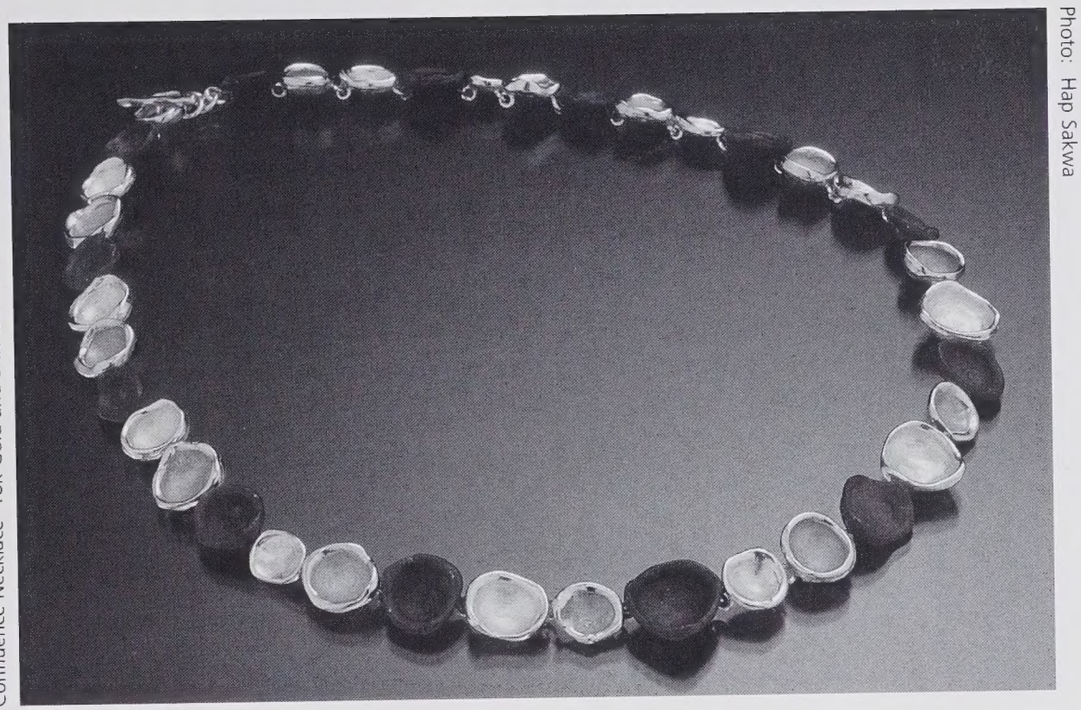

Confluence Necklace 18k Gold and Blackened Steel

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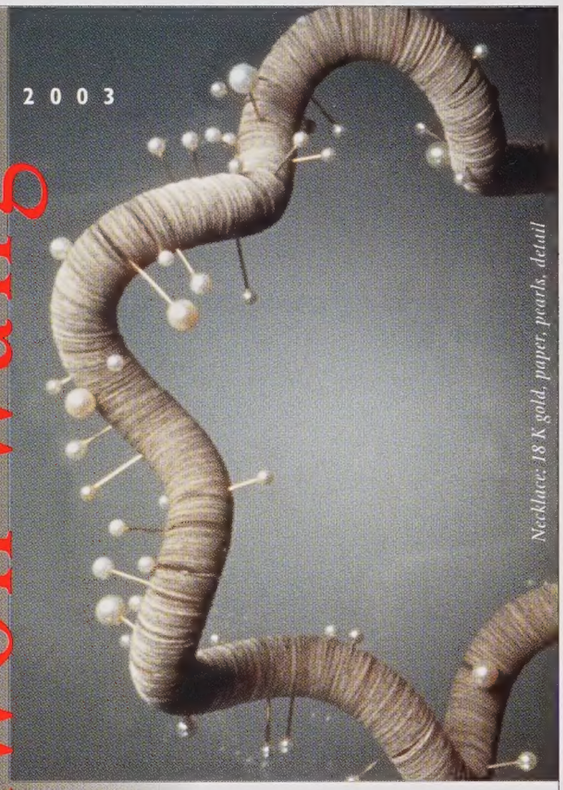

Necklace; 18 K gold, paper, pearls, detail

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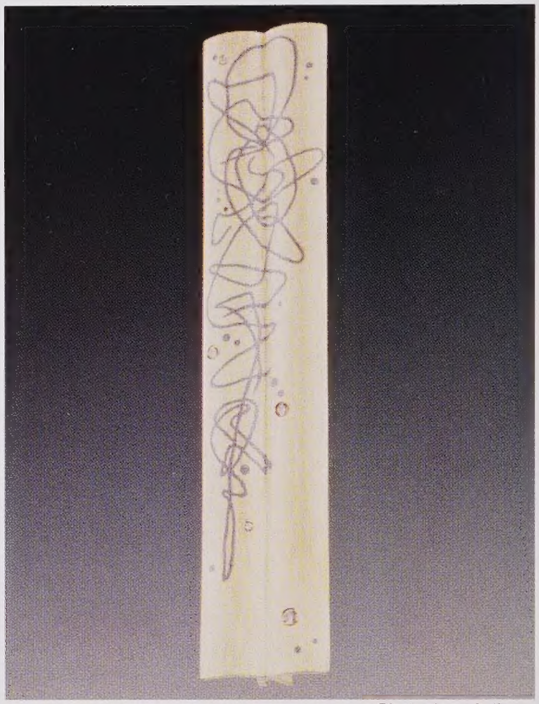

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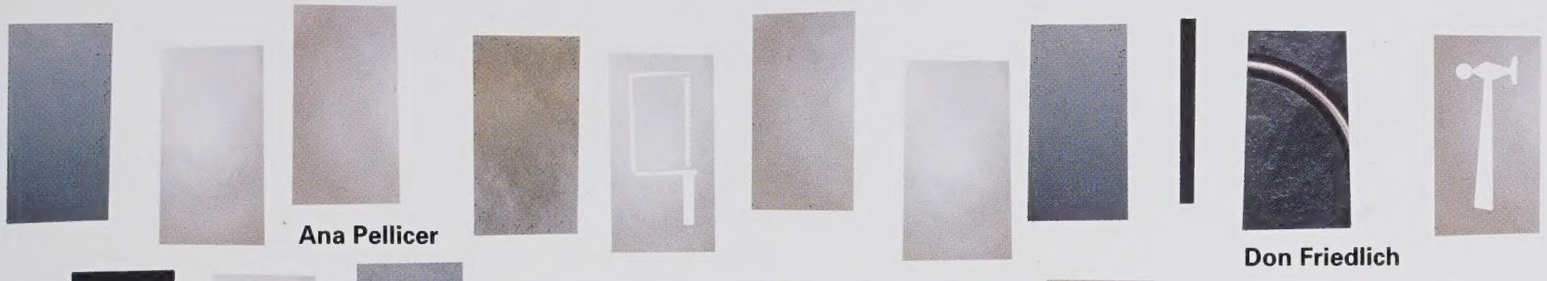

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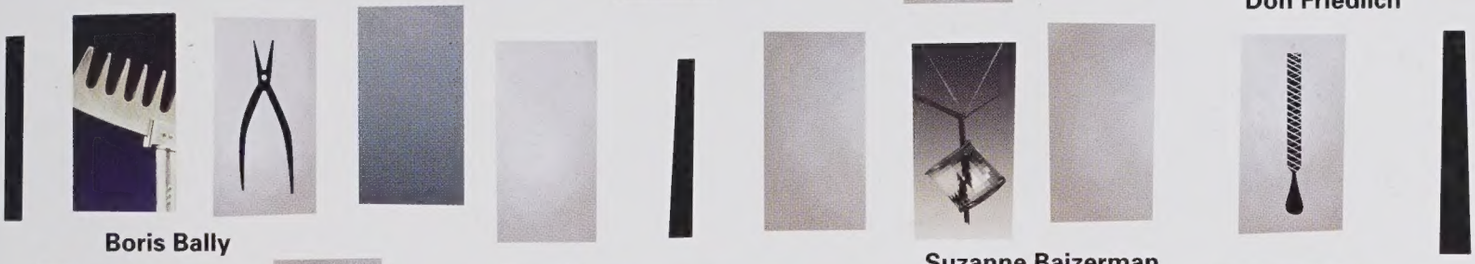

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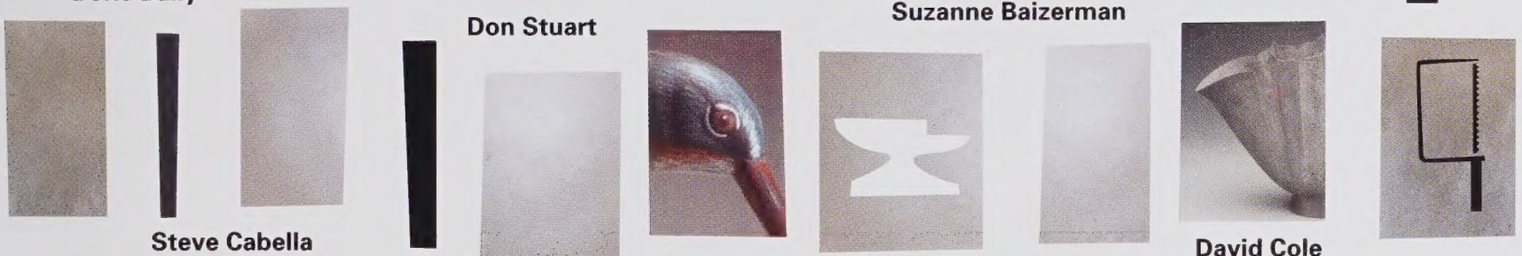

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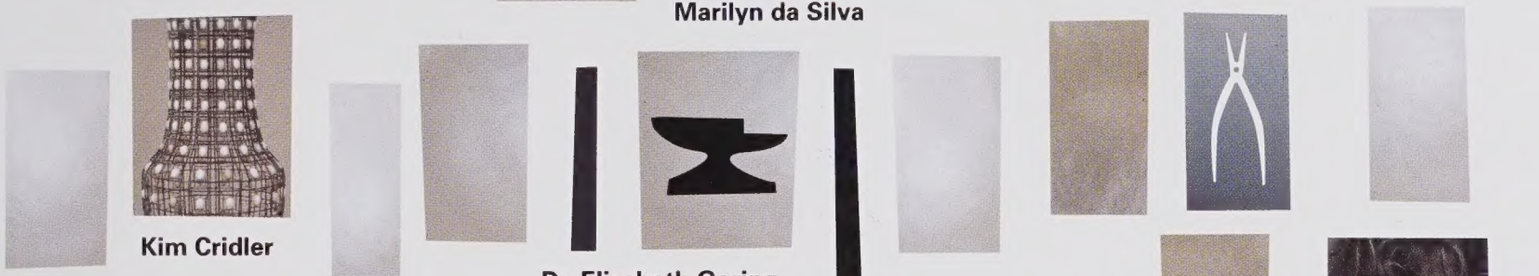

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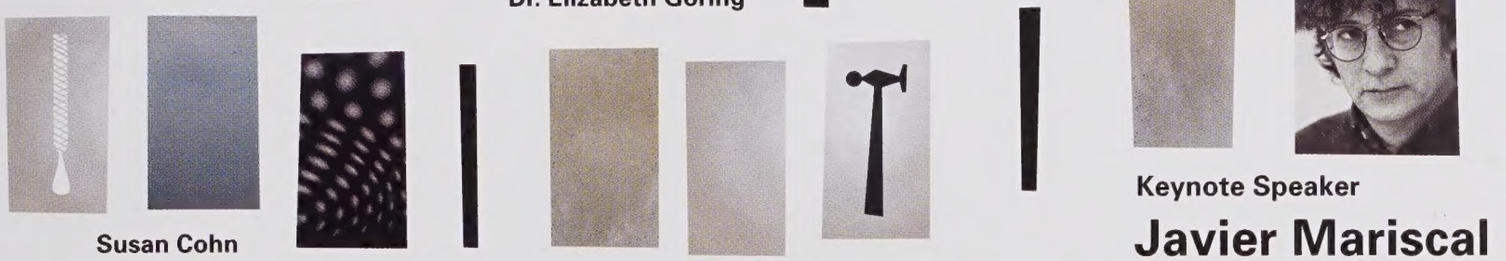

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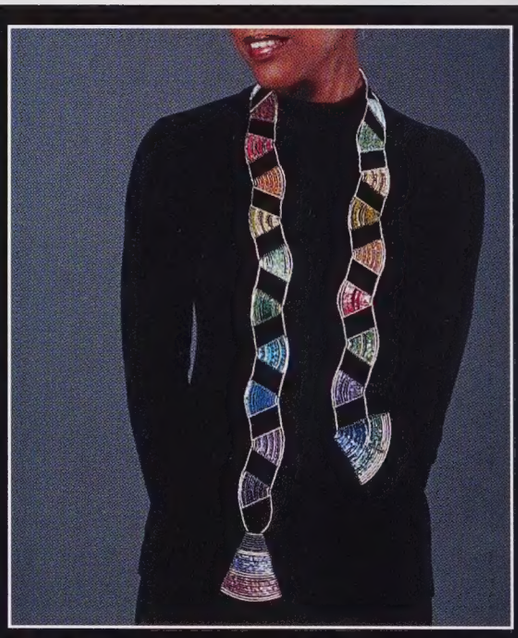

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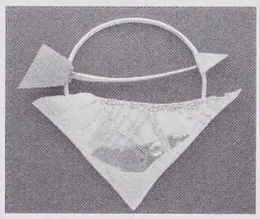
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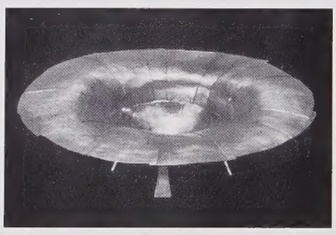
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Laurie Cowen, detail, aluminum mezuzah

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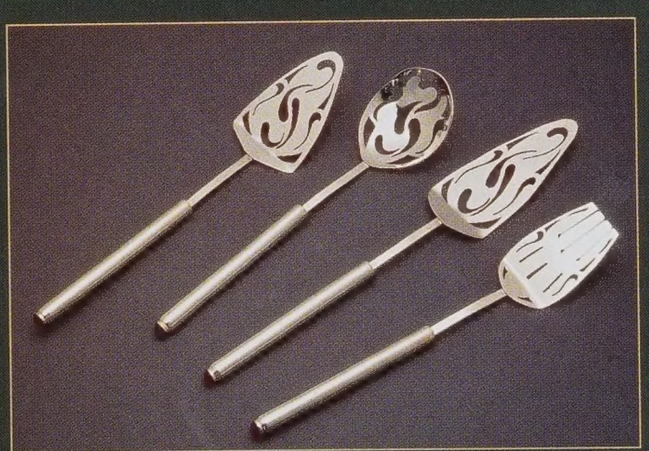

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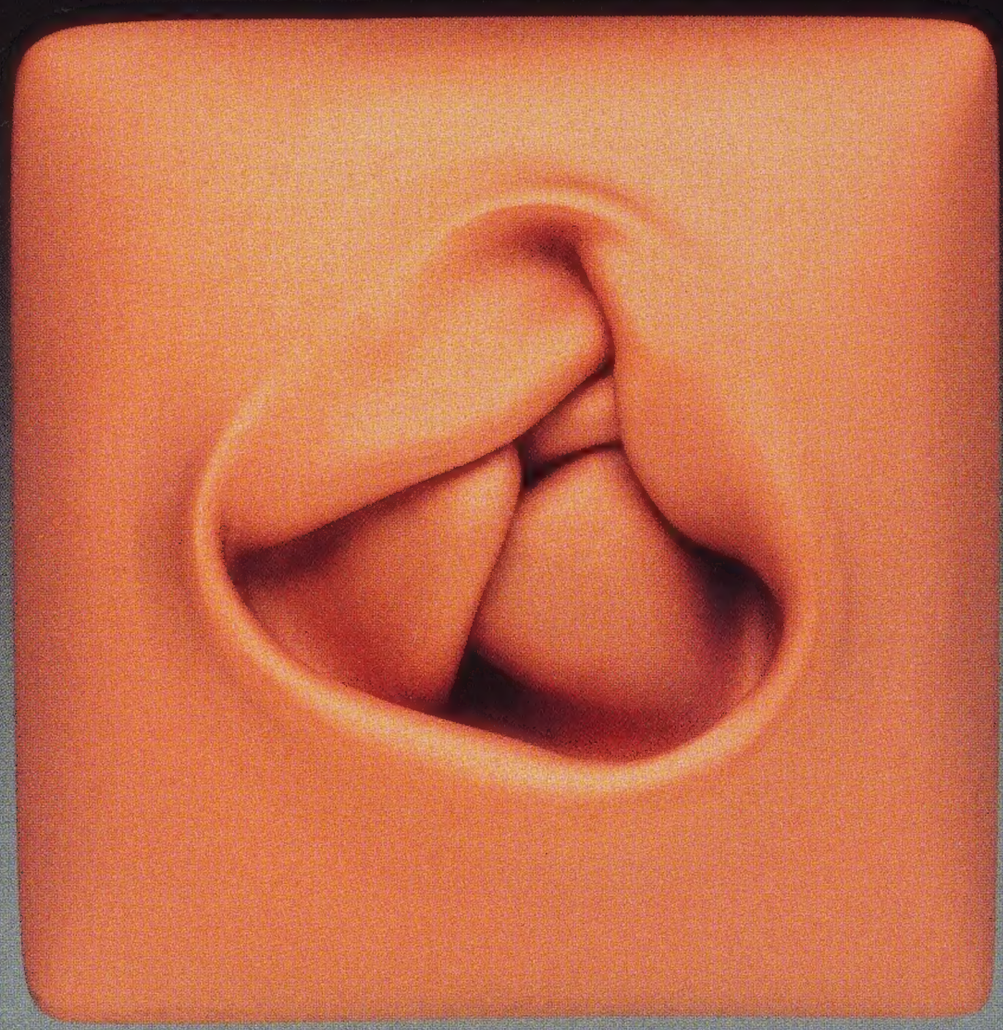
The Work of Yuyen Chang

by Kate Hensler Fogarty



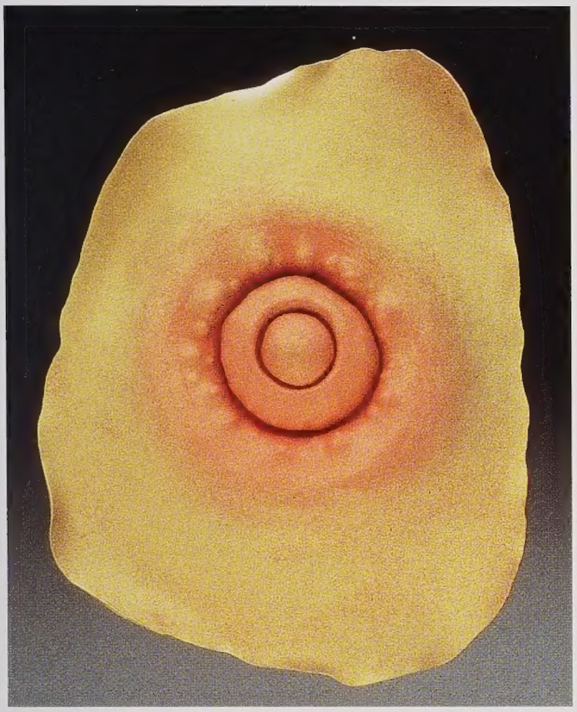
Untitled (brooch), "Orifice Series," 2001
copper
2 x 2 x 2"
Photo: Jim Wildeman

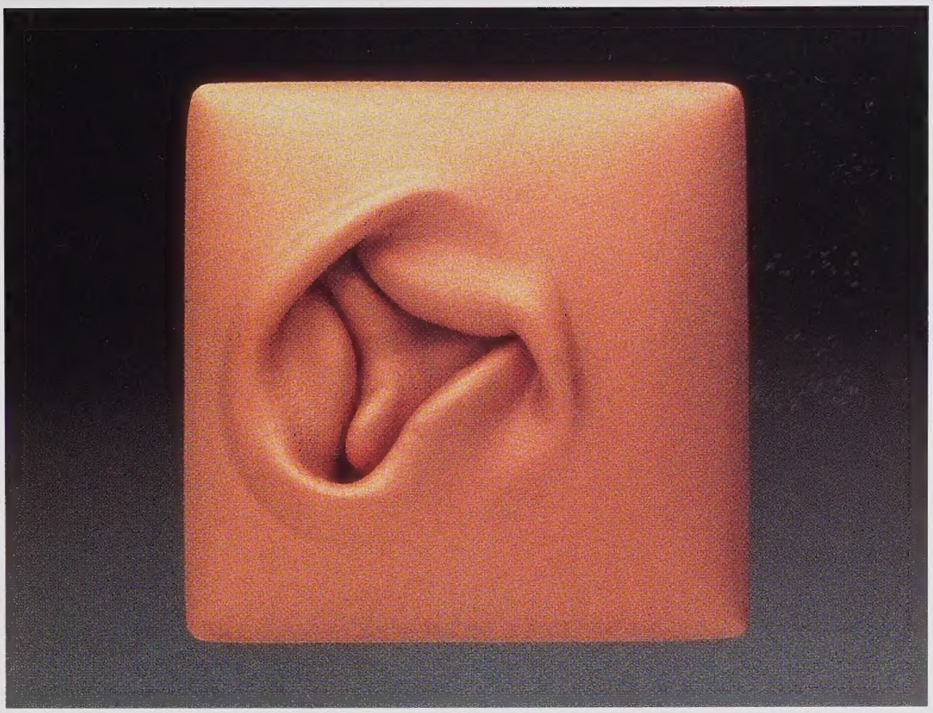
Should I look, or look away? In an instant, Yuyen Chang confounds the viewer. Her complicated work plays on our innate attraction to jewelry, its invitation to gaze, and our equally human repulsion from physical deformities: scars, growths, cysts, wounds. As baubles and boils incite these diametrically opposed responses, Chang's difficult pieces send one scrambling for the socially appropriate behavior.

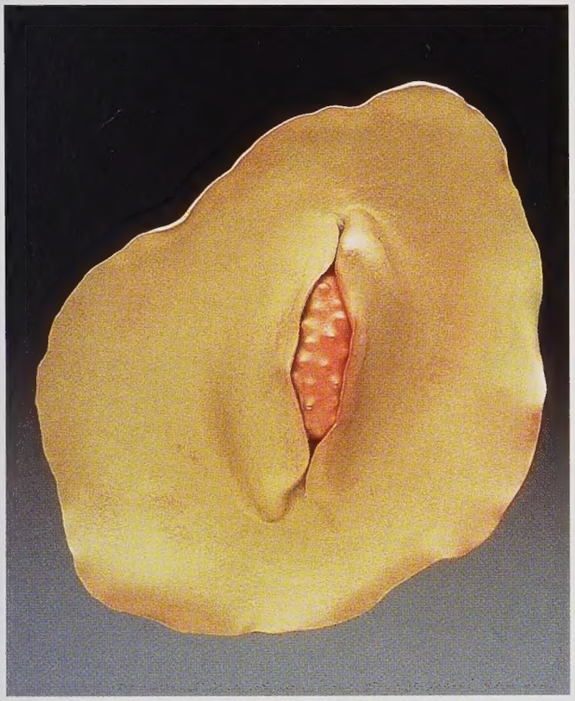
Chang's work is intentionally anthropomorphic, disturbingly so. She likens her technique to that of a plastic surgeon, shaping and sculpting on and beneath the surface, using traditional fabrication methods like die-forming, chasing, and repoussé. Yet Chang's goal is hardly to beautify or "improve" her subjects; she labors to distort, to subvert. Though Chang made these pieces while still a student, she reveals an awareness of the allure-enhancing and status-bestowing powers of jewelry, especially in modern society, as well as our obsession with erasing any wrinkle, bulge, or flaw.

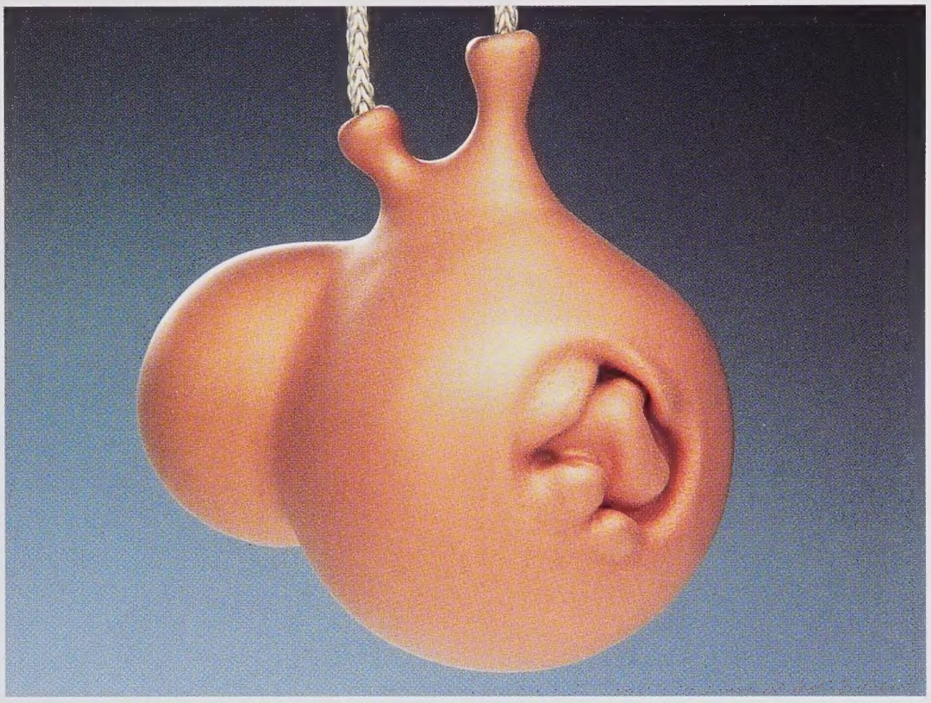
A most unusual jewelry artist, Chang bypasses witty and aims straight for unsettling. If one were simply to describe her navel- or mouthlike brooches, they might seem wry or humorous, but in the flesh, as it were, her jewelry incites not a smile but a straight face—maybe even a wince. This is volatile territory, indeed; deformities are not a laughing matter. But our compulsion to look at them, Chang proves, is a fruitful topic for art indeed, especially art meant to be worn on the body.

Consider the brooches in her "Orifice Series". At their center is an irregular orifice, from which poke crowded tongues? Fingers? Genitals? The brooches feel not quirky but creepy, sinister, *abnormal*. A similar sensation is elicited by a copper pendant in the same series. While finely executed, its bivalve, bloated form recalls a medical









specimen, a detached organ, as if the owner were showing off her recently removed tonsils in a jar.

The brooches in Chang's most recent "Chi-Pa Series" assume more amorphic, growth-like contours. The artist coined the term "chi-pa" by combining the Chinese word for beauty or talent with that for scar or wound, to capture the ambiguous quality of these works. Yet the central, fleshy, woundlike gashes make it almost impossible to call them beautiful. One suspects a line of Yuyen Chang engagement rings is all but out of the question. Her intellectual yet visceral pieces defy not only social mores, but language as well. We're going to need a new vocabulary to praise this complex work. ⧗

Kate Hensler Fogarty is editor of *Glass Quarterly.*

clockwise from top left
Untitled (brooch), "Chi-Pa Series," 2002
copper
3 x 2 x 1/2"
Photo: Jim Wildeman

Untitled (brooch), "Orifice Series," 2001
copper
2 x 2 x 2"
Photo: Jim Wildeman

Untitled (pendant), "Orifice Series," 2002
copper, silver chain
3 x 2 1/2 x 2"
Photo: Jim Wildeman

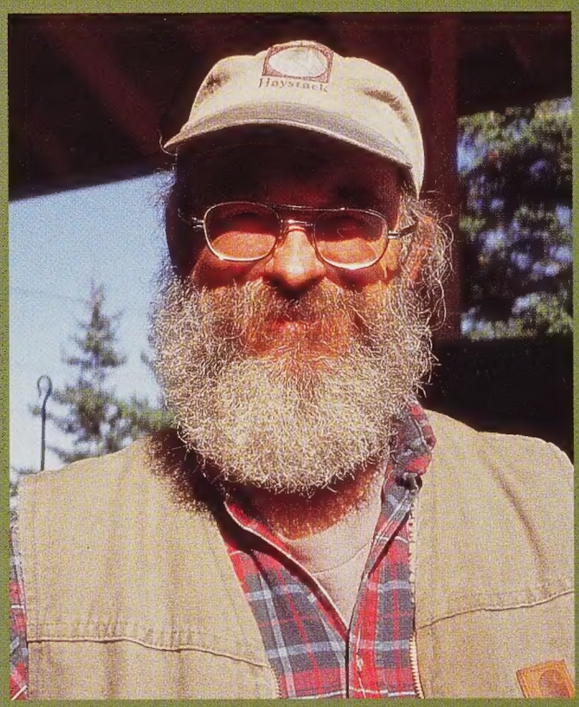
Untitled (brooch), "Chi-Pa Series," 2002
copper
3 x 2 x 1/2"
Photo: Jim Wildeman

STUDIO VISIT

Doug Wilson

by Ellen Wieske

Interior view of Doug Wilson's studio.
Photo: Ellen Wieske



Doug Wilson in front of his studio in Little Deer Isle, Maine, 2002.
Photo: Ellen Wieske

October in Maine is beautiful. The trees are ablaze with color. The chlorophyll stops production in the leaves of deciduous trees, exposing trace elements of iron present there. It is a good time to visit a blacksmith. Doug Wilson lives on remote Little Deer Isle between Eggemoggin Reach and the East Penobscot Bay. The morning I visited Wilson, I passed a pond on my left where two deer drank from the water's edge. Further down the road, a stack of traps and buoys signaled the end of another season of lobster fishing for this community. Sarah's Way is the name of the short dirt road leading up to Wilson's studio and home. He, his wife mixed-media artist Jennifer Morrow Wilson, their eight-year-old daughter Sarah, and "Dog" the dog live here. It is a two-story wooden frame home that Doug and Jennifer designed and built themselves. "We started building in 1991, the year we got married, moved into it in '92, and finished it just recently," says Doug. The house sits back on a thickly wooded lot, with open spaces between the house and studio.

In 1981, Wilson assisted blacksmiths Frank Turley and Demetrius Gerakaris with workshops at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. He also met Ron Pearson, who offered him the use of a 24-by-24-foot forge behind his studio. Wilson accepted the offer and stayed in Maine. The space served him well for many years, but it was soon stuffed with materials, tools, and machines. All design work and drawing had to be done at home in Jennifer's studio several miles away.

The new studio was completed in 2000. His friend Ralph Sproul, an industrial builder and fellow smith, hired 25 helpers via the Internet for the move. They showed up

with a logging truck with a 40-foot boom, as well as other moving gear. Amazingly, thousands of pounds of equipment and stock were moved with ease.

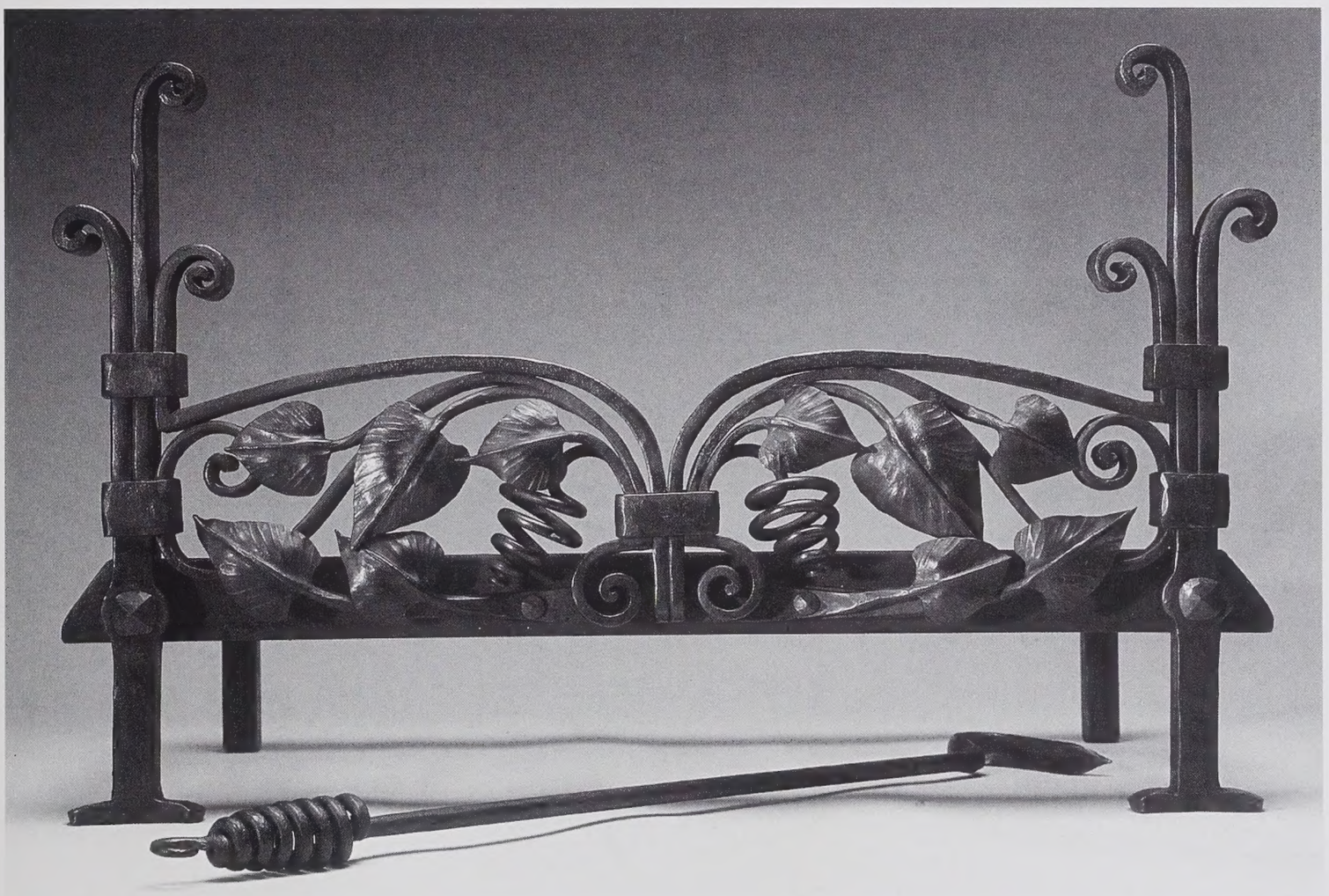
The studio building sits on the front of the property. It looks across at the old Deer Isle Information Booth that Doug and Jennifer rescued when the new one was built; they are restoring it to use as a showroom. The new studio is thirty by forty-two feet and has a long covered porch. The front wall has large sliding doors to enable easy access to the porch area. Twelve-foot ceilings provide a clear, open space; it feels roomy but not cavernous. Just inside the sliding doors is where the larger equipment sits. Two-thirds of the way into the studio, the chimney serves as a visual room divider, while benches run along the back and left walls. Large windows above the benches let in a great view as well as natural light. The studio provides ample space to have several projects going on at once. There are two large steel-top tables where drawings and models can be laid out and worked on. Two side draft forges and a wood-burning stove for heat feed into the grand brick chimney. The side draft collects all the dust and soot from the coal forges and leaves the workspace and the air clean. Upstairs there is an office, a place to draw, and a storage area.

The day I visited, work on a model for a chandelier was well underway. It is a commission for a very specific location in a new home, with a roof that has curves suggesting sails filled with wind. Wilson created a scale model of a section of the ceiling in his studio so the chandelier model could be matched and fit perfectly. It will hang from his studio ceiling enabling the clients to see the model from the installed perspective. The challenge of the project is what Wilson loves. He says he is happiest when a proper fit can be achieved between an object he makes and the life in which it is to be used. His inspirations come from environments natural and manmade, organic or personal. His studio reflects this sentiment, with its closely linked interior and exterior spaces.

Doug Wilson's studio is designed to house and work on commissions as well as his own personal designs. He also plans to use the space for teaching, as he continues to teach at many craft centers and schools and wants to extend his knowledge through his own studio. Here there is room for all that and more. ⧗

Ellen Wieske is a metalsmith residing in Maine.

Doug Wilson
Fire Grate and Poker, 1998
iron
26 x 32 x 19"



Stone Fetish Brooch, 2001
silver, brass, bronze, iron wire, stone
2 1/2 x 3"
Photo: George Post

This article is the second editorial collaboration between *Metalsmith* and *AJM*, the monthly magazine published by Manufacturing Jewelers and Suppliers of America. This year we are publishing companion articles that address the complex role of the jeweler in the marketplace. Here *Metalsmith* examines the dynamically successful career of Thomas Mann, while the April and May issues of *AJM* contain articles that delve into the business aspects of promoting and selling one's work. The full text of the business-related articles will be available on the *AJM* web site at www.ajm-magazine.com. *AJM* can be ordered on-line or by calling (800) 444-6572, ext. 3038.

Thomas Mann

The Business of Reinvention

by Patricia Harris and David Lyon

Stone Fetish Necklace, 1996
silver, brass, bronze, iron wire, stone
75 x 3"
Photo: Sara Essex

Not so many years ago Thomas Mann figured that 2002 would be his year to retire. But the projected date has come and gone, and Mann is busier than ever with reinvention instead of retirement. The publication in 2001 of the monograph *Thomas Mann: Metal Artist* may have summarized his career as a jeweler, but it didn't bring down the curtain on his performance. If anything, he's busily disproving F. Scott Fitzgerald's assertion that American lives lack second acts.

Mann is so well known for his wildly successful production line of jewelry that Thomas Mann Design, his company, sometimes obscures Tom Mann, the crafts artist behind it. In 1980, he launched what he would come to call Techno-Romantic jewelry, now found in more than 150 shops. Mann's workshop keeps up to 250 different items in production, but Mann believes that as Techno-Romantic approaches market saturation, he needs to alter his image. "I want to be able to separate the one-of-a-kind artist who changes quite frequently from the one known by the field for a particular type of jewelry," he says.

It's not hard to understand the popularity of the Techno-Romantic line. It is whimsical and irreverent, pairing sentimental shapes (hearts, hands) and images (mostly sepia photographs) with the harder, industrial look of machine parts, perforated metal panels, and electrical components. When the work debuted, the simple irony of juxtaposition gave it a fresh feel at a time when so much other jewelry drew either on the spare abstraction of mid-century modernism or the ethnic

Knife Float (brooch), 2000
silver, aluminum
1 1/2 x 3"
Photo: George Post

associations of African or Asian folk art. Mann and a handful of other jewelers were making a new tribal art of the American psyche—a form of pop collage, the instant artifact.

There's also a wit and quick charm to Techno-Romantic, with its simple messages (engraved on the surface, or sometimes handwritten on encapsulated pieces of paper) or its obvious references to the pop graphic world of comics, tattoos, and body piercing. In short, the style rides the zeitgeist.

"The funny thing about Techno-Romantic was that I never suspected that it would ever become as popular as it has," Mann says, and that popularity has greatly influenced his career path. His decision to use found objects and nonprecious metals virtually dictated that he would have to produce work in great volume to turn a decent profit. Ultimately, economies of scale led him to the workshop, or atelier model, which he had experienced as a jeweler's apprentice during his high school years. These days, Thomas Mann Designs employs three artisans, who make finished pieces, and four apprentices, who fabricate parts.

"I learned early on that the best skills and talents of the designer were always going to be spent at the conceptual level, at the prototyping level, at the customer relations level," Mann says. "The head of the shop had to rely on a skilled staff to execute the designs effectively and efficiently. You just can't do all the work yourself."

But he didn't realize that the atelier approach would also thrust him squarely into the world of suits. "I had to go and learn other things that, quite frankly, I had become an artist to avoid," Mann admits. "I had to become a human resource manager and learn how to read financial statements, learn what the business cycles were during the year, and know when it was appropriate to invest money and when it wasn't."

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As it turned out, Mann had a knack for such things. He now spends roughly a third of his time on business management, a third on marketing (an area he feels many artists neglect), and a third on design and creation. But although most of his daylight hours are devoted to the nitty-gritty of commerce, the businessperson hasn't eclipsed the artist.

"In the real world of business, I don't make decisions that are focused on bottom–line results," Mann says. "I make decisions that are based on making investments in risky artistic undertakings."

He may have registered the trademark, but Mann believes that Techno-Romantic has become a genre unto itself as other people assimilate the look and feel of the style. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but Mann sees a cold economic reality. "For me to survive," he says bluntly, "I have to move on."

Mann finally goes into the studio at night, when he is least likely to be disturbed by business calls, and it's clear that this is the third of his career that he enjoys most. While he couches the need for new work in the terms a market analyst might use, his true bottom line is aesthetic and artistic. "I'm like any artist," he says. "You live for inventing the new."

Mann has always made one-of-a-kind works, then mined them for elements that could serve as starting points for new variants within the production line. His popular "Design for Survival" course for crafts artists, in fact, begins with precisely such a process: challenging students to create a new work, decipher its inherent design vocabulary, and invent a production line based on abbreviated components.

The professor is back in school himself. Instead of creating new work that can translate into Techno-Romantic, he is creating pieces that can serve as departure points for a new phase in his career. "I have three new, very well-developed systems operating at the moment," Mann says. And to differentiate them from his best-known work, they are being marketed under the rubric of "Thomas Robert Mann."

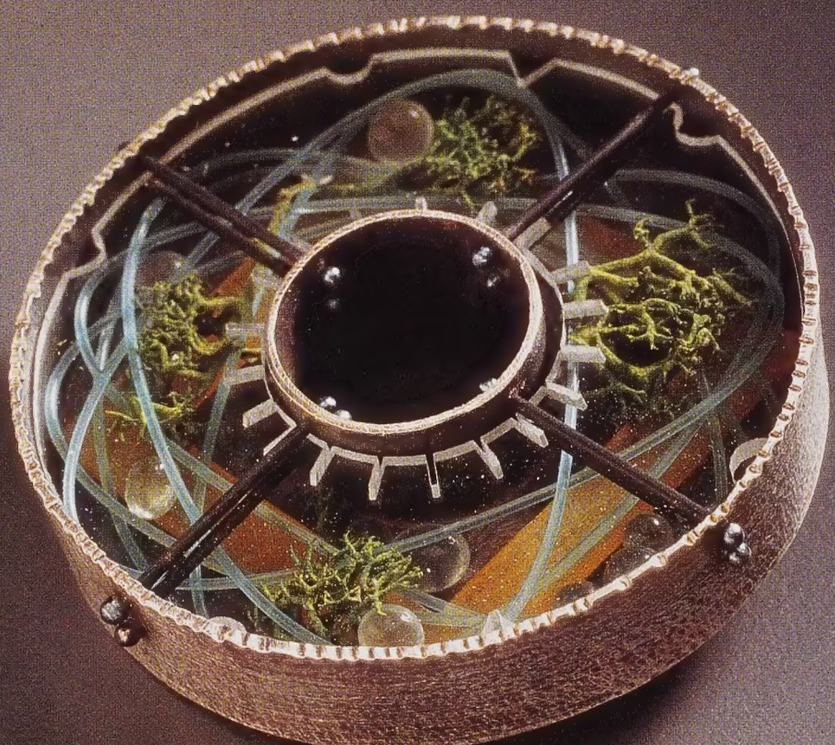
The biggest change in all three lines is their departure from representational imagery. After two decades of building a career as the quintessential postmodernist—pillaging the storehouse of memory, history, and desire for images and objects—Mann is working in abstract forms.

That's not to say that he's abandoned the spirit of his earlier work. The adrenaline-charged, quick wit of Techno-Romantic has tended to obscure the mystical and spiritual qualities of Mann's imagery, but part of the line's appeal has always been a sense of yearning. Many Techno-Romantic pieces resemble Latin American or

Heart Pond (brooch), 2000
silver, aluminum, micarta,
laminated acrylic
3 x 4"
Photo: George Post

Homage a Cornell, 1987
box construction: wood, glass, acrylic, paper, found objects
16 x 14 x 4"
Photo: Bob Barrett

Container Pin, 2002
sterling silver, acrylic, lichen, glow acrylic, ceramic beads, found objects
3/4 x 3 x 3"
Photo: Ralph Gabriner



Caribbean folk altars, with their accretion of found objects and the inclusion of photographic imagery that suggests an intensely personal, if inscrutable, significance. And that yearning persists in all three of Mann's new systems. He's simply stripped away some of the distractions.

The "Stone Fetish" group, which grew out of the summers he used to spend on Vinalhaven Island in Maine's Penobscot Bay, represents the spiritual aspect of Mann's aesthetic vision at its purest. "You can't be on the island without being inspired in some way," he says. While most artists try to capture the island light in painting, Mann took a different tack. One day a friend showed up with a stone he had found on Brimstone Island, a nearby basalt outcropping of black stones, and asked to have it made it into something to wear.

Mann went into the studio that night and created a bezeling system to mount the irregular piece. "I added some little feathers and odds and ends of metal stuff, and put a hook on it with a little rawhide pull on it," Mann recalls. When he gave the piece to his friend, the man exclaimed that he had dreamed that exact piece of jewelry. "Shivers went up my spine, and I said, I must be onto something," Mann says. "So I went out hunting rocks that day, and by the end of that month I had made 20 or 30 pieces and I was off and running."

While it could be tempting to see the "Stone Fetish" works as a throwback to Mann's immersion in the counterculture of the 1970s, they are a far cry from hippie "power amulet" jewelry. The stones remain the focal point of the composition, but the bezels and bindings are integral to the works.

The term "fetish" suggests the traditional object of a primitive culture believed to have a magical power to protect or aid its owner. But the term also has an association with sexual fixation, and the metal bars and cords with which Mann wraps his stones and even their bezels carry more than a hint of the restraints associated with bondage. The stone, by implication, becomes a passive object, soft and almost liquid, captured within restraints.

A piece like *Stone Fetish Brooch* (2001) evokes a primitive tribal fetish with its dangling bronze feather, but the smooth stone is captured within a heavy metal bezel, pinned in place with a bar and what looks like an indicator for a dial, like the hand of a watch or some kind of measuring instrument. Small calibrations scratched across the top of the frame emphasize the mechanical, possibly industrial nature of the metalwork. It is almost as if technology has subjugated nature in a perversely erotic bondage. The more you contemplate the work, the more disturbing it becomes.

The stones, however, have a deliciously limpid quality. Like Jean Arp's amoeboid figures or Constantin Brancusi's sculptures, their curves are anthropomorphic, feminine, even sexual. Bands of silver bar and iron wire confine the womanly lines of the black stone in *Stone Fetish Necklace* (1996), yet the decorations attached to the bonds suggest tenderness and loving attention rather than the imposition of brute force.

Self-Portrait (thumbs up), 1995
brass, bronze, micarta, photo, laminated acrylic
$2\,3/4 \times 4\,1/2$"

In contrast to the bondage references in the "Stone Fetishes," the components of Mann's "Float" jewelry are impaled. The frames for these works function like drawings in metal. Inside the frame, the components "float" on metal pins. Mann makes no attempt to disguise the impalings—they are a key feature in each piece.

Mann always invests his work with an energy that encourages the viewer to make instant associations. The impaled creatures of "Float" pins might as well be specimen beetles in a scientific cabinet. The pins, often secured with small decorative balls, themselves resemble the simple barbell of ritual body piercing. The flat objects within a "Float" composition look like they will turn and flap, responding to force like a weathervane to the wind. This associational richness is part of their appeal. Most Mann jewelry seems tightly bound together, but the "Float" pieces are so potentially kinetic that they look as if they could suddenly fly in all directions.

It is almost as if technology has subjugated nature in a perversely erotic bondage. The more you contemplate the work, the more disturbing it becomes.

Clever connection is only the beginning. In *Amoeboid #3* (2002), Mann has indulged his penchant for combining yin and yang in a split

Have a Nice Ride, 1980
bronze, silver, acrylic, NY subway token
3 x 2 1/2"

composition. On the left, the carved phenolic plastic—he identifies it as micarta—has the texture and color of aged wood or perhaps ivory. It looks warm, organic. The contrasting pieces of metal, which carry a patina of partially abraded paint, share some of the curves but none of the organic qualities. They are cold and hard—the seeming detritus of a technological culture.

This creation of faux artifacts is characteristic of Mann, who has his workshop and sometimes outside contractors routinely fabricate "antique" or "discarded" objects to use in his production jewelry. Art is, after all, artifice. "Authenticity" is a red herring: Mann seeks to make these objects look as if they have back stories associated with them. Whether or not they have a real history is irrelevant. Their only role is to be evocative.

The juxtaposition of frame with framed allows Mann a great deal of variability in composition. The frames on many "Float" pieces are simply metal (usually silver) bars constructed in geometric forms: an oval, a circle, a leaf-like ellipse. Others closely outline the shapes of the objects they enclose. *Knife Float* (2000) is unusual because Mann has chosen to truncate the frame at the top, allowing one of the "knife" blades (itself essentially a rendering of a primitive stone knife in metal) to extend outside the frame. Given the subject matter—a weapon—this escape from the frame suggests something ominous, as if the pierced object is breaking its restraints.

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Some of Mann's most intriguing new work continues a line of artistic investigation that he began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when he made a number of collage boxes as an homage to the artist Joseph Cornell. The influence of Cornell speaks volumes, in fact, about the roots of Techno-Romantic, with its appropriation of emotional history. Mann's collage boxes, like Cornell's, featured irrational juxtapositions of found objects—usually objects once considered beautiful or precious and hence invested with a previous owner's emotional attachment. Mann mounted them in glass-fronted specimen cases, as Cornell did.

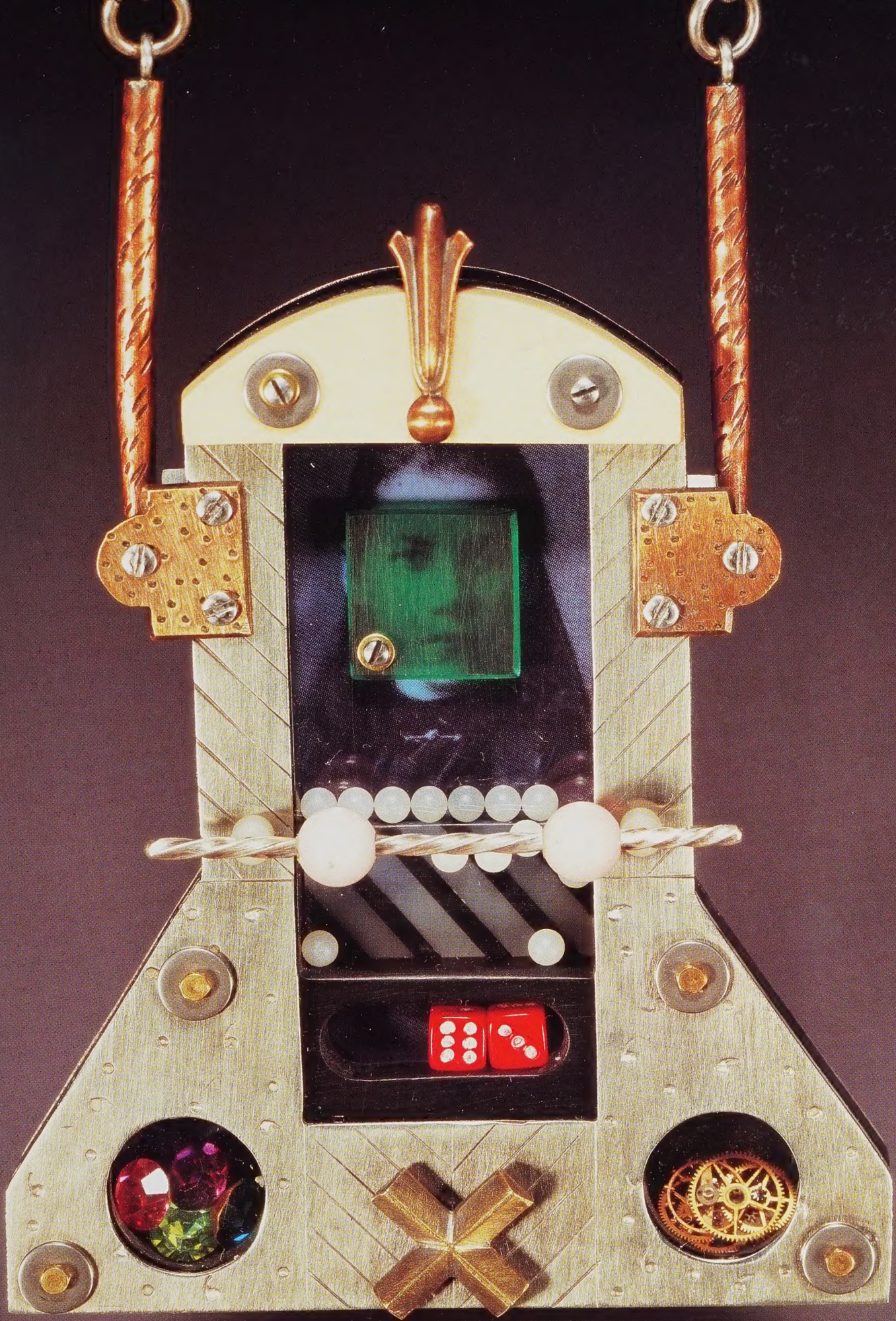
About 1980, Mann found a way to make the collage container his own, as *Have a Nice Ride* illustrates. This container pin holds a New York subway token in a horseshoe-shaped vessel with pert little bronze wings and a pediment plaque urging the viewer to, in fact, "have a nice ride." It represented a step away from Cornell because the objects no longer seemed formerly precious, or as if they had any emotional history at all. Instead of an exercise in nostalgia, the pin was a quick quip, a witty comment, a toss-off.

Other container pins over the years have found a middle ground between the flashing smile of the Techno-Romantic and the longing over loss characteristic of Cornell's essentially nostalgic collage boxes. In *Blue Girl* (1990), an antique photograph of a woman forms the backdrop for a display of gemlike bits of glass or plastic, small brass gears, and tiny dice.

The newest group of containers, however, marks a movement away from the easy accessibility so characteristic of Mann's earlier work. The objects within the containers are no longer someone's possessions. In some of these more recent works, such as *Container Pin* (2002), Mann has freed himself (and the viewer) of the constraints of personality and hence the temptation to sentimentality. While the pin contains found objects (as well as objects "fabricated to appear found," as Mann puts it), they are abstract and unfamiliar. What are the intensely orange little balls, other than little balls? The wire? The disks? The objects themselves give no hint—and they are all the more mysterious as a result. In the end, the piece is successful precisely because it is so abstract. It cannot be reduced to an assemblage of the familiar.

These mature abstract compositions share a sensuous physicality with Mann's earlier work, but they exist in their own aesthetic space and time—outside reference. This amounts to artistic reinvention with a vengeance. ⧗

Critics **Patricia Harris** and **David Lyon** are based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Blue Girl (collage box neckpiece), 1990
silver, brass, bronze, copper, found objects, antique photograph
3 1/4 x 4 3/4"
Photo: Will Crocker

Martina Lang
Scent Cushion I, 1996
silver, copper, leather, fragrant blossoms, cord
5 x 2 3/8 x 2 3/8"
Photo: Lothar Bertrams

Small Wonders

Aromatic Adornments

by Linda Dyett

Of all the luxury commodities in the world, fragrance is the most paradoxical. Volatile and ephemeral, it nevertheless summons up our deepest hidden memories. Unseen, it is felt everywhere. Given its flyaway nature—as well as its precious ingredients—fragrance calls out for beautiful containment.

And certainly we've all seen our share of exquisite perfume bottles—the visual symbols of scents. When we think of perfume containers, we think of Lalique flacons with wisteria stoppers. We think of Guerlain's Moghul-inspired bottle for Shalimar, or the heavy crystal Baccarat container for Jean Patou's Joy, or of assorted Art Deco and Art Moderne masterpieces commissioned by Coty, Houbigant, Lanvin, Dana, Caron, and Schiaparelli. But glass is only one of the possibilities. A longer tradition in perfumery places precious aromatic essences in metal containers, and that tradition continues today.

In the Western world, perfumery begins in the medieval period. Regarded as blasphemous in the Dark Ages that followed the fall of the Roman Empire, fragrances came into use—in solid and liquid form—in the eleventh century. It was then that crusaders, returning from the East, brought back with them a multitude of aromatic items: spices, twigs, leaves, and powerful animal fixatives in paste form (such as civet, ambergris, and musk), which soon proved to be worth their weight in gold. With sanitation and fresh, running water virtually nonexistent, the air was heavy with the stench of open sewage, unwashed bodies, and lived-in clothes. Bathing and laundering were considered dangerous, in part due to contaminated water supplies. In such an ambiance, aromatics became treasured substances, called upon to counter the noxious odors in the air.

Those of means—royalty, the nobility, the clergy—protected their personal space with the use of small globular vessels known as pomanders, whose potent aromas created an odor shield against the outside world. Initially a small, simple paste ball made of ambergris, the pomander was the earliest portable fragrance container used in the Western world, first appearing in Germany, Italy, and France. From a humble, utilitarian vessel, it soon evolved into creations of ornate gold and silver. By the fourteenth century, the name *pomander*, from the *French pomme d'ambre*, or "apple of ambergris," had come to signify not only the contents themselves but their protective containers. To accommodate additional ingredients—musk, civet, sandalwood, nutmeg, angelica, labdanum, and castoreum—metal pomanders evolved from hinged spheres of two equal halves to intricately sectioned vessels holding a variety of these paste and powder scents. Worn by both men and women as a pendant from a chain around the neck or suspended from a chatelaine (a girdle worn at the

Tiffany & Co.
Heart-shaped Vinaigrette with Finger Chain, late 19th century
rock crystal, platinum, yellow gold, rubies, diamonds
height 1 1/2"

waist), pomanders eventually came to be shaped like nuts, skulls, hearts, books, and ships. Smaller ones were often attached by chain to a finger ring and held in the hand, or doubled as cape buttons, rosary beads, or jeweled collars known as carcanets.

Passed down from generation to generation, pomanders, often textured with filigree, niello, and repoussé, studded with gems, or engraved or enameled with intricate or fanciful motifs, were more than exquisite and intricately sectioned baubles. Through the potent, precious scents they held, they acquired a sorcery of their own. The mere wearing of a pomander on the body, or its presence in the hand, was thought to guard the wearer and those in proximity against evil and disease.

A perforated scent vessel known as the smelling box or pouncet box appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century. While it retained the pomander's familiar spherical, gourd, skull, or snail shape, this novel container held liquid perfumes, blended with powder and secured on a tiny sponge or piece of cotton. Like the pomander, this aromatic container was not meant to perfume the skin, but to offer its wearer instant sniffs of scent, and was favored by generations of nobles, courtiers, and wealthy merchants who were drawn to the delicacy of liquid perfume—even as they maintained a vestigial belief in the pomander's amuletic powers. But by the seventeenth century, the 600-year-old pomander had become an object of derision–its heady musk and ambergris contents considered overbearing.

In the late eighteenth century, the smelling box was succeeded in popularity by the vinaigrette, a new kind of container that housed a piece of cotton wool or a tiny sponge soaked in a pungent liquid scent known as vinegar water. When the container was unscrewed or flipped open, the vinaigrette's sharp aroma filled the air, clearing the nose, warding off foul aromas, and reviving flagging spirits. The cotton or sponge reposed for safekeeping behind an interior grille that was initially a perforated piece of metal. Later, both the grillework and the exterior became wildly ornate. The lid, serving as the design vehicle, became the site of engraving or repoussé, or sometimes it consisted of a mounted gemstone. The stopper, initially made of cork or glass, was eventually replaced by a smoothly operating spring cap. And the tiny grille, arguably the vinaigrette's defining feature, evolved into a miniature filigree or pierced-work tour de force, displaying ornate designs such as baskets of flowers, arabesques, initials, and scrolls.

To protect against corrosion, the interior of the vinaigrette was lined with gold, silver, silvered glass, glass, or porcelain. Since the contents evaporated rapidly, the container had to be hermetically sealed, requiring precision jewelry-making techniques.

In the nineteenth century, vinaigrettes were held to the noses of ladies who fainted–the usual reason given being tight corsetry, though anemia was also rampant in those days. Vinaigrettes took numerous shapes. Many resembled tiny, bound books; others were egg-, horn-, or escutcheon-shaped. Some looked almost identical to perfume flacons of the time, but their containers were thicker, to minimize evaporation. Sized to fit in the palm of the hand, vinaigrettes were frequently attached by chain to a finger ring.

First winning favor in the fourteenth century, liquid perfumes, such as floral bouquets, had another purpose. They were used not so much to scent the air as to scent the self: both the skin and the clothing (especially the handkerchief) that surrounded it. Hungary Water, the first alcohol-based perfume, was introduced in 1370. To accommodate these liquid eaux, gold and silver flacons began to be produced throughout Europe

In the late eighteenth century, the smelling box was succeeded in popularity by the vinaigrette, a new kind of container that housed a piece of cotton wool or a tiny sponge soaked in a pungent liquid scent known as vinegar water.

in the late fourteenth century. These small ornamental vessels with tightly fitting caps (to prevent spillage and alcohol evaporation) were frequently shaped like gourds, ovals, and shells, their surfaces engraved or filigreed with arabesques or foliage designs. Until sometime in the nineteenth century, these flacons were individually crafted and delivered empty to their owners—only the wealthiest members of society—who brought them to apothecaries or perfumeries, where precious scents like rose or lavender essence were decanted into each container.

By the eighteenth century, artful perfume bottles were being crafted by metalsmiths all across Europe. But liquid fragrances had also begun to be carried in a new kind of flacon, made of glass. The novelty of viewing the perfume within a transparent container helped spur the growth of the glass perfume bottle industry in Venice, Bohemia, Silesia, France, and England. While some glass flacons mimicked their precious gold and silver predecessors, others depicted fashionable motifs of the day: billing doves and portraits of young girls in the late seventeenth century, pastoral scenes and views of ruins in the eighteenth. By the nineteenth century, crystal, cut lead, or multicolored glass flacons featured virtuoso staining and cameo, jeweled, and enameled

Marine-style Nautilus, late 19th century
rock crystal, yellow gold, enamel, diamonds
height 4"

American
Cloverleaf Chatelaine, early 20th century
gold, enamel

Biba Schutz
Hanging Scent, 2002
oxidized fine and sterling silver, copper
pendant: 4 x 3 x 3 1/2"
Photo: Ron Boszko

The interior perfume vial is removable, allowing the wearer to insert a potpourri sachet within the caged vessel form.

surfaces. The most opulent yet, these bottles and pendant flacons incorporated metal as an overlay of filigree, or as a decorative element with enamels and gemstones.

It was also in the eighteenth century that the chatelaine rose to prominence. This extraordinary accessory, defined as a clasp, shield, or hook that was worn at the waist, served as a carryall for both women and men. Suspended from it were one or more short chains ending in rings or swivel catches. These in turn were used for hanging small objects, often a vinaigrette or perfume flacon, or a variety of objects and trinkets–including whistles, scissors, tape measures, or timepieces. Since it could be seen from all angles, the chatelaine was as lavishly decorated on the back as the front, often in chased or repoussé gold or silver.

With the Industrial Revolution in full force by the mid-nineteenth century, perfume bottles and vinaigrettes had become nearly ubiquitous. No longer were they solely commissioned by the well-to-do. Now mass-produced, they were sold in volume, at affordable prices, with widescale distribution and availability. Both bottles and vinaigrettes were manufactured in metal, glass, horn, shell, wood, and other materials.

The chatelaine had a couple of revivals in the nineteenth century. During the 1830s and '40s, it was characterized by designs of pierced and engraved steel, often with Moorish motifs. In the 1860s, the chatelaine reappeared, largely for ceremonial use at dances and balls. Appendages included fans, pillboxes, and dance cards and pencils, as well as perfume flacons or vinaigrettes.

One manufacturer-retailer notable for shaping the public's perception of fragrance and fragrance containers was Tiffany and Co. The first Tiffany store opened in lower Manhattan in 1837, selling stationery and giftwares; and while such items remain in the company's inventory, this emporium-as-institution brought its exquisite designs, impeccable craftsmanship, and straightforward American values to gemstones and jewelry, sterling silver flatware and hollowware, and fine china and crystal, which have since become its stock in trade. In addition, as an arbiter of New World good taste, Tiffany began offering women's fine perfumes, as well as perfume bottles, vinaigrettes, and chatelaines, in its debut catalog of 1845. In the late nineteenth century, Louis Comfort Tiffany, son of the founder, connected his family business

with a variety of timely design movements—from Arts and Crafts to Art Nouveau. More artisan than shopkeeper, he also developed a unique type of iridescent glass (inspired by excavated ancient Roman glass) named "Favrile" (referring to the Latin word *faber*, for *craftsmanlike*). Tiffany also revived and promoted a number of antique jewelrymaking techniques, such as guilloche enameling, which involves transparent enamels that reveal a metal pattern engraved beneath. In most cases, the cutting technique was executed on an engine-turning lathe that produced a variety of patterns.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Tiffany repertory expanded to include a wide array of traditional and exotic artistic styles including neo-classicism, Japonisme, Islamic motifs, Arts and Crafts, and Art Nouveau. The eclectic Victorian style was also explored in Tiffany & Co. aromatic jewelry. One notable example is an extravagant crystal "Heart" vinaigrette bottle attached to a diamond ring. Its design influences come from French cabinetmaking, in particular marquetry of the mid-eighteenth century, where scrolling curves, acanthus leaf borders, and floral cornucopias were featured in ornamentation.

With the explosion of commercial perfumery in the early 1900s, the volume of flacon production rose to meet a steadily growing market. Celebrated jewelry and glass designers such as Lalique and Baccarat were commissioned to create stylish glass flacons for many of the sparkling and seductive new perfumes by Coty, Guerlain, Houbigant, and a host of other fragrance houses. The bottles themselves were placed (like jewels) in equally sumptuous satin- or velvet-lined, leather-covered boxes. Perfumery had become an art form—or rather, it was seen as the perfect merger of art and industry.

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What's more, this was an art and industry intended for women. While some of the early twentieth-century scents were shared by men, perfumers soon made their lush bouquets (like Chanel No 5 and Arpège) and their voluptuous Oriental potions (like Shalimar and Tabu) expressly for women. (Until the 1950s, men's scents would be limited to such necessities as shaving creams.)

Christina Smith
Untitled (pendant), 1996
sterling silver sheet and wire
pendant: 1 1/4 x 2 x 3"
Photo: Galen Palmer

Designed to contain the lavender and jasmine that the artist grows in her garden.

Karen Gilbert
Grand Opening (pendant), 1996
sterling silver, blown glass, perfume
pendant: 5 x 2 1/2"

In the 1920s and '30s, small- and miniature-sized perfume bottles were incorporated in an ingenious multisectional or interconnected jewelry item known as the vanity. Vanities were designed as portable makeup holders in an age that delighted in glamour. Once considered the scandalous artifice of actresses and women of ill repute, makeup came into favor with the explosion of the beauty industry in the 1920s. It was carried not in a bulky handbag, which suited neither the short, diaphanous flapper dress of the '20s nor the bias-cut fashions of the '30s, but in vanities, which in turn were attached to or incorporated into bracelets, necklaces, or even finger rings. Vanities were usually made of metal, enamel on metal, or Bakelite. With a perfume flacon or powder compact often serving as the centerpiece, vanities celebrated and even flaunted the very notion of beauty.

Their apparently seamless exteriors, which often disguise the hinge, cap, and lid, encase exquisitely engineered, mechanically ingenious interiors that safeguard the liquid, paste, or powder fragrances inside.

Mikala Naur
Aromatic Tea Egg Necklace, 1995
metal tea eggs, gold leaf, gold chain, plastic filament
length 18 1/2"

A small piece of scented cloth is inserted into each egg.

The modern glacé, or solid perfume compact, first appeared during World War I in France, when alcohol was rationed and wax perfumes became briefly popular. In the 1960s and 1970s, when the fragrance industry was becoming increasingly competitive, the glacé re-emerged as a largely American marketing phenomenon. Sold by cosmetics companies—Max Factor, Revlon, Fabergé, Corday, Avon, Estée Lauder—in limited editions, around Christmas or for Mother's Day, glacés were whimsical and lighthearted conversation pieces designed to appeal to women who still regarded perfume as a slightly risqué luxury, best saved for special occasions. Requiring no screwcap, cork, or dauber, these novelty items were inexpensive to produce and easy to house in an infinite variety of amusingly shaped containers that offset any lingering "bad girl" implications of wearing perfume. From hearts and flowers to adorable teddy bears, kittens and dogs, glacés proved to be witty and nostalgic. The more ambitious ones were quoted from historic designs: Regency cameos, Victorian hearts, Battersea boxes, netsuke ivories.

Handcrafted by costume jewelry artisans, the exterior motif was first rendered in a detailed drawing, then sculpted in wax or metal, from which a pliable rubber mold was made, allowing for richness of detail. The compacts were then cast, molded, polished, and plated in molten copper, nickel, rhodium, or gold finish at jewelry manufacturing plants. Often these compacts were set with faux gemstones, crystals, and cameos.

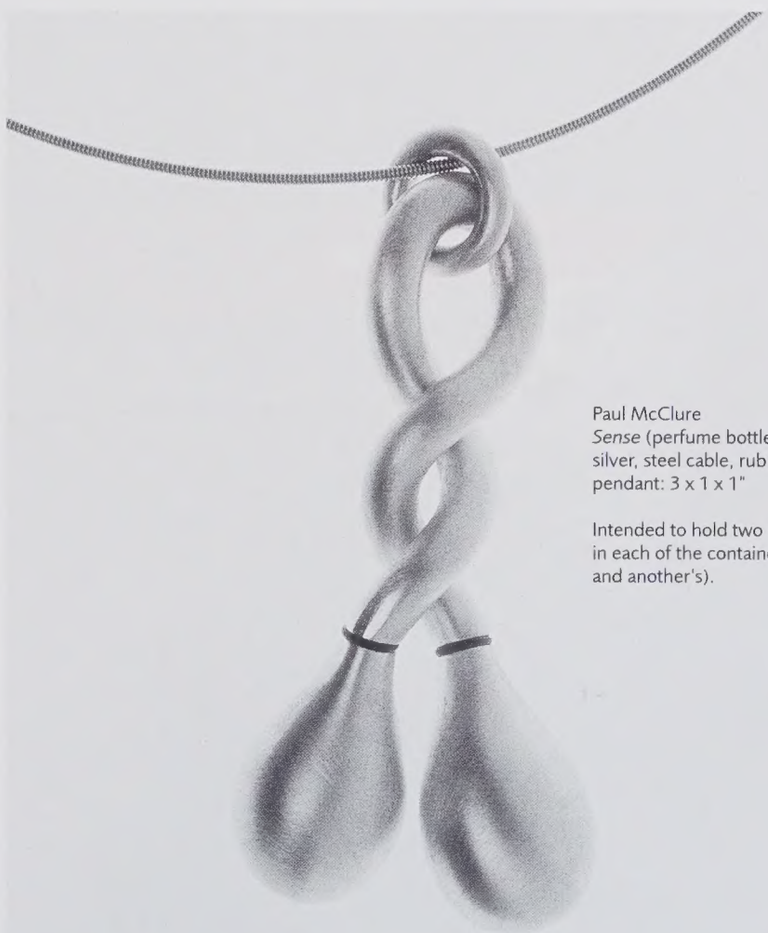
Estée Lauder, for one, has continued the solid perfume compact tradition, introducing a new collection each Christmas. Recent additions include a turning Pleasures ferris wheel, with seats that swing, and a circus tent containing Beautiful, which opens to reveal a trapeze artist and dancing bear.

In recent years, contemporary metalsmiths and glass designers have begun to explore the perfume container as a jewel-like body adornment, creating unique and precious portable vessels that reject the ubiquity of modern commercial fragrances, while at the same time challenging conventional notions of jewelry. Art jewelry is designed to interact, adorn and protect, often with secret recesses known only to the wearer. Nowhere is this more evident than in pieces with fragrance compartments, providing personal and intimate sensory pleasures.

Whether exquisite or amusing, these small

Jennifer Kellogg
Flower Necklace, 1998
sterling silver, blue topaz, flowers
length 18"

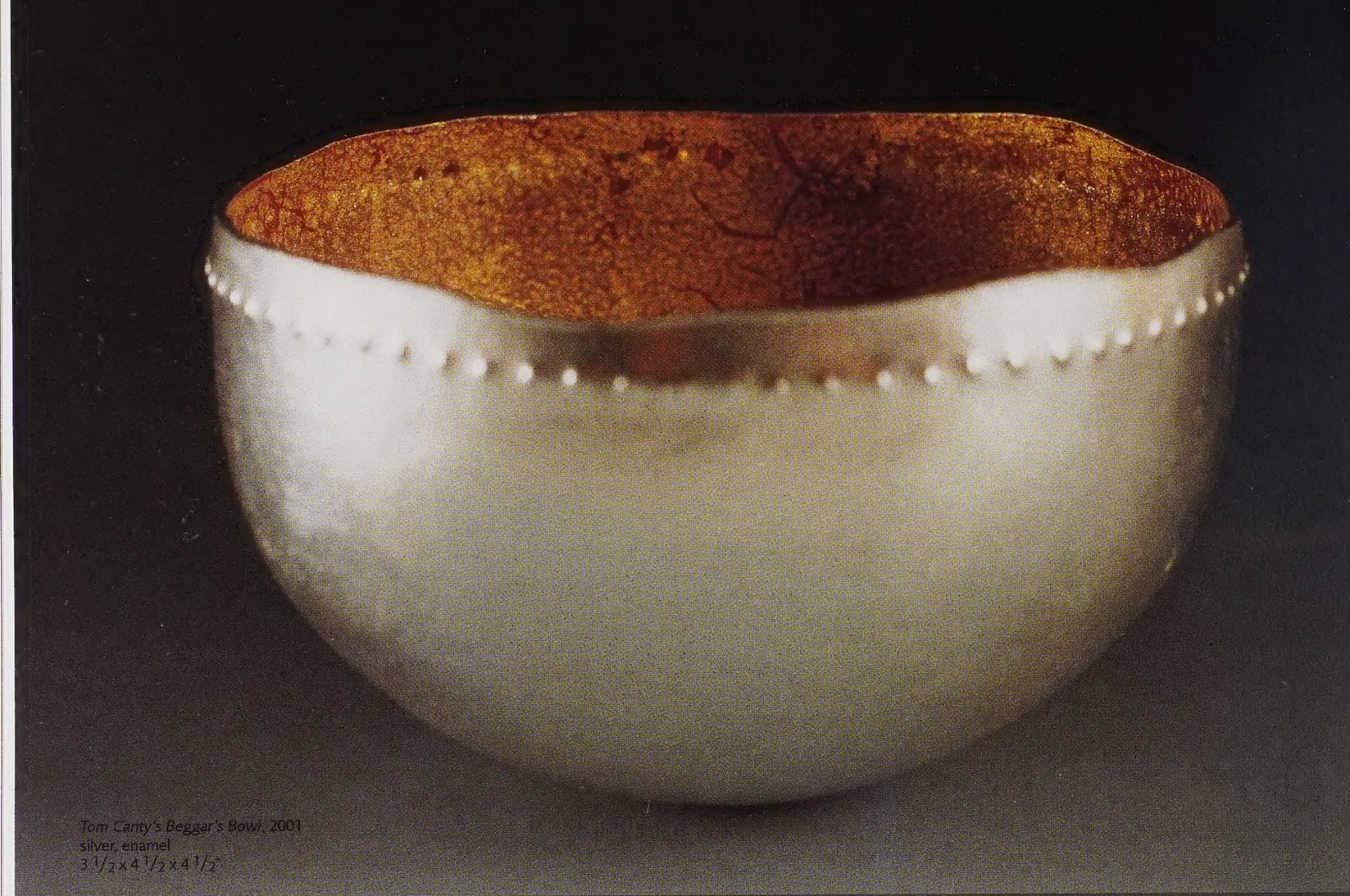
aromatic wonders remain first and foremost functional gadgets designed to protect their precious, volatile contents. Their apparently seamless exteriors, which often disguise the hinge, cap, and lid, encase exquisitely engineered, mechanically ingenious interiors that safeguard the liquid, paste, or powder fragrances inside. From a design point of view, it is the inner-outer structure that distinguishes these containers from other forms of ornamentation. But from the wearer's perspective, these tiny jewels are much more than mere gadgets or containers. It seems that these contemporary perfume containers are returning to their historic origins as amulets or charms. In an age of uncertainty, which places a high value both on portability and on sensory stimulus, these vessels satisfy a basic human urge not just to sniff a scent or smooth it onto the skin, but to keep it close at hand—for the sake of comfort, protection, or enticement, to transform an intimate environment, or recall a beloved memory. ⧗



Paul McClure
Sense (perfume bottles/pendant), 2001
silver, steel cable, rubber
pendant: 3 x 1 x 1"

Intended to hold two separate scents in each of the containers (the wearer's and another's).

Linda Dyett, a New York–based writer specializing in beauty, fashion, and design, is co-author of *Secrets of Aromatic Jewelry*.



Tom Canty's Beggar's Bowl, 2001
silver, enamel
3 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2"

Stubble Beggar's Bowl, 2001
copper, enamel
3 x 3 1/2 x 3 1/2"

A Fulfilling Absence

The Enamelware of Sarah Perkins

by Glen R. Brown

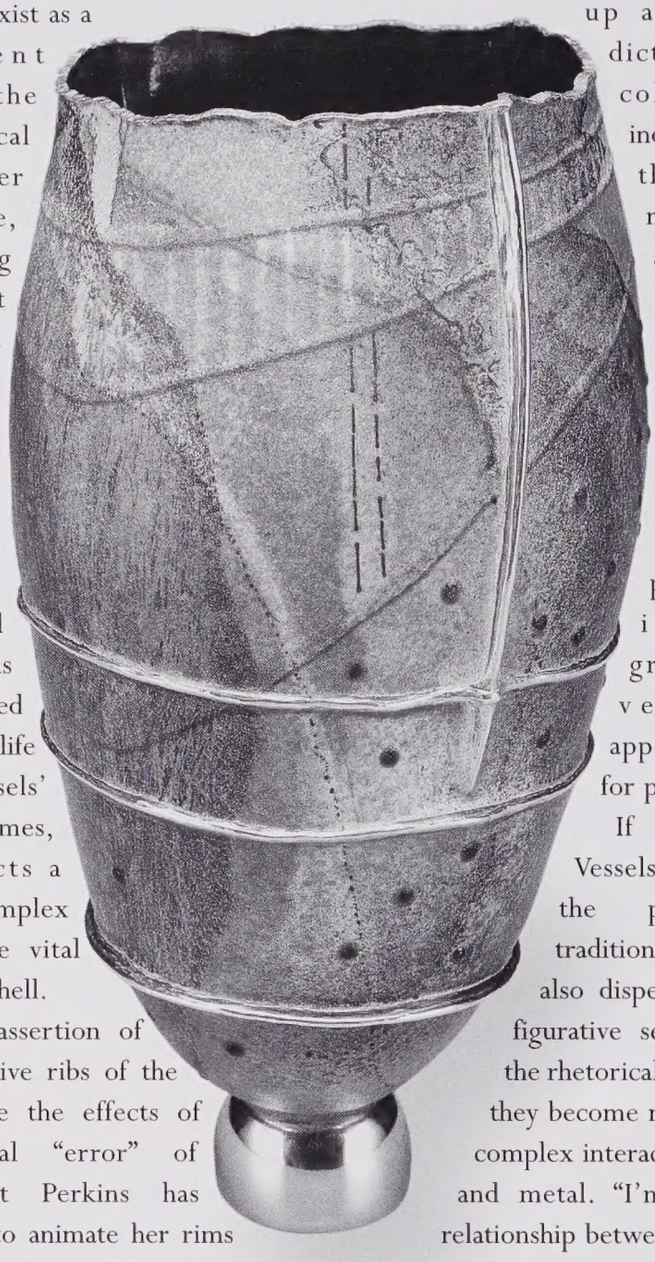
The tendency to dismiss enamelwork as a superficial art—literally, as a matter of surfaces glossing over the duller hues of base metal, and figuratively, as nothing more profound than a decorative, and therefore decadent, mode of appeal to the eye—has clearly diminished in recent decades.

No longer, as in American craft exhibitions of the 1930s, is enamelware treated as a subcategory of ceramics, principally an affair of glaze. Dispelling the stigma of superficiality has been characterized by both literal and figurative reworkings of the enamel surface; on the one hand, the obvious physical violation of enamel by the increasing expression of the metal beneath, and on the other, a lampooning, even denigration, of enamelware's beauty and the development of the surface as a carrier of meanings that surpass shallow formal concerns.

The vessels of Missouri metalsmith Sarah Perkins have played a significant role in bestowing a new depth and content upon contemporary enamelware. While her work has passed through many stages since the early 1980s, her credo has remained consistent: determine what lies outside the limits of acceptability for a given technique and seek to incorporate those proscribed effects into an acceptable work. In general terms, this has meant that Perkins has been inclined to grant metal an equal standing with enamel. Rather than subordinating it, as in champlevé or cloisonné, to the restrictions of a pattern created by discrete fields of differently colored enamel, she has freed it to follow an independent logic. Conceptually, this realignment is significant to Perkins, whose aspirations for enamelware include its use as a vehicle for exploring issues of balance that have nothing to do with metal or glass. Disrupting the absolute calm of the enamel surface, in other words, is a means of invigorating the conceptual serenity of enamelware, of unleashing from it a symbolic potential previously dormant under a diverting layer of color.

In a current series that Perkins has aptly named "Folded Vessels," the effort to undermine superficiality comes overtly to the fore. Based on experiments with a series of brooches that drew visually on organic forms such as plants, insects, and crustaceans, the "Folded Vessels" bear raised metal ribs, both vertical and horizontal, that suggest the petioles of leaves or the ridges on a carapace. In purely material terms, by working primarily with transparent enamels, Perkins has

allowed the silver of the vessel's body to remain subtly visible through the layer of color. Secondly, and more importantly, by exploiting an effect that is normally considered detrimental to a raised vessel—the creasing of the metal as it is hammered—she has created linear reliefs that allow the silver to exist as a design element independent of the enamel. The vertical repetition of silver rings, for example, suggests a rippling upward movement of the surface, a crawling of the vessel's skin, and contrasts directly with the perpendicular movement of light through the lucid layer of enamel. This dynamism, reinforced by the allusions to life forms in the vessels' organic color schemes, grants the objects a presence more complex and infinitely more vital than that of a mere shell.



Contained Folded Vessel, 1998
silver, enamel
8 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2"
Photo: Tim Barnwell

Reinforcing the assertion of metal in the obtrusive ribs of the "Folded Vessels" are the effects of another intentional "error" of metalsmithing that Perkins has exploited in order to animate her rims with an organic irregularity. "I keep hammering after the metal is work-hardened, trying to distress it and get it to crack at the top," she explains. "That's considered a mistake when you're learning to smith. Although I'm not a total rebel, I like to break the rules lightly." Another example of Perkins's transgression for calculated effect is her loose interpretation of the cloisonné technique in some of her vessels: her wires fail to define discrete enclosures for the color. Employed as linear design elements in their own right—and hammered or filed unevenly to enhance their expressive potential—they meander their way spontaneously through the enamel fields rather than dividing them up according to the dictates of an overall color pattern. This independence enhances the importance of metal in the work and serves as a counterbalance to the expressive freedom of the enamel. To fine-tune this equilibrium, Perkins often augments the presence of metal by incorporating granulation on the vessel rims or appending silver bezels for pearls or stones.

If Perkins's "Folded Vessels" physically disrupt the placid surfaces of traditional enamelware, they also dispel superficiality in a figurative sense by emphasizing the rhetorical content of her work; they become metaphors for a more complex interaction between enamel and metal. "I'm interested in the relationship between the two," she says, "because I'm interested in relationships generally. I'm concerned with how people use things and how they relate to one another. That's why I make vessels in the first place." Noting that most significant interaction between people is accompanied by eating or drinking, often in a ritualistic manner, she has consciously sought to create a sense of unspecified ceremonial purpose for her work. Preciousness, too, is a quality that she has attempted to cultivate in her vessels, although her conception of the precious has more to do with the implied fragility of objects and the reverence of the viewer than with any

Noting that most significant interaction between people is accompanied by eating or drinking, often in a ritualistic manner, she has consciously sought to create a sense of unspecified ceremonial purpose for her work.

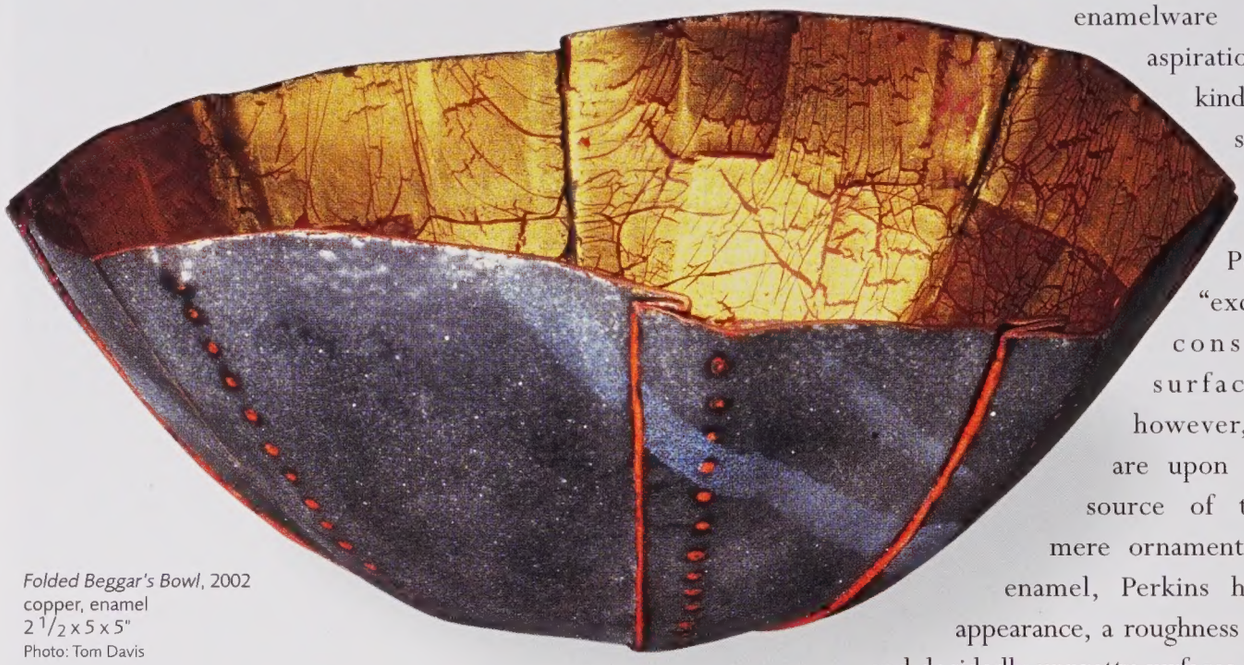
Rosewater Itradan, 2001
silver, enamel, ebony, coral, pigments
7 x 12 x 3 1/2"
Photo: Tom Davis

particular issues of beauty. The value of her precious objects, likewise, is connected not to the cost of their materials but to a psychological and perhaps even moral concern for their preservation—the sense that they embody something profound and irreplaceable.

"I think that a lot of what I do comes from the fact that I was brought up an atheist," she speculates. "If you look at human making in different cultures, much of the work is about the basic need for ceremony, ritual objects that mark certain beliefs. I don't have those beliefs already, so I try to make work to satisfy that essential need in me and to address the need that I see in other people." Whether or not anyone might actually use her vessels for ceremonial purposes is not really of concern to Perkins. It is the general implication of ritual—the sense that a proper order and an appropriate place exist for certain actions; that nihilism does not underlie all aspects of life—that matters more to Perkins than the specifics of any ceremony itself. As utilitarian objects, her vessels are, after all, simply bowls, jars, or teapots. Only the qualities of her surfaces separate her work from more mundane vessels, connecting them to psychological needs that from a materialist perspective are difficult to fathom. Literal superficiality, in other words, is in Perkins's work the key to a figurative depth.

If the strategy that Perkins enacts in her "Folded Vessels" is essentially a solemnization of what in many contexts can be a rather frivolous medium, in some of her other recent vessels she has followed the antithetical path of satirizing the exaggerated prettiness to which enamelware usually succumbs. In whimsical pieces such as *Mae* and *Sophia*, a teapot and a lidded jar respectively, she lampoons the stereotype of voluptuousness associated with enamelware by producing curvaceous vessels dripping with the suggestion of bejeweled necklaces, gold chains,

and strings of pearls. Like the notorious ornamented busts of Mae West and Sophia Loren, their namesakes, the vessels are hypertrophied emblems of sensual indulgence—implicit send-ups of enamelware that has no higher aspiration than a sex-symbol kind of status. The initial seductiveness of these vessels, especially the turquoise color that Perkins describes as "excessively pretty," is a consequence of their surfaces. Interestingly, however, these same surfaces are upon closer inspection the source of the vessels' undoing as mere ornaments. By underfiring the enamel, Perkins has given it a gritty appearance, a roughness associated with natural and decidedly unpretty surfaces such as sharkskin.



Folded Beggar's Bowl, 2002
copper, enamel
$2\frac{1}{2} \times 5 \times 5$"
Photo: Tom Davis

Adding to the disconcerting effect of the surface texture in these pieces is the exuberant, excessive decoration, which flirts with the boundaries of bad taste. Daubing on wet enamel in lines, mixing opaques and transparents, and sifting dry enamel over the surfaces to create uneven effects that include stenciling done with parts of her hand or arm, Perkins has created surfaces that resist any facile harmony. Other somewhat incongruous techniques include melting various glass beads onto surfaces to create rows of amorphous lumps or "little cosmic doughnuts," or fusing on short enamel threads that have been prepared by pinching a small quantity of molten enamel from a crucible and pulling it across the room. The combination of these diverse techniques obviously does not produce surfaces that are actually displeasing to the eye, nor are they really intended to. "I wanted to make work that addressed the issue of enamel and prettiness," Perkins explains. "By including things that were a little unusual, I hoped that you would be taken aback when you looked closely. It's a tension rather than ugliness, enough to show that for me *pretty* is a dirty word."

Blue Triple Cup, 2000
silver, enamel
3 x 3 x 3"
Photo: Tom Mills

Perkins's intent to thwart the easy visual consumption of her works takes a slightly more malicious turn in another recent series, the "Triple Cups." Named for their construction as double walled-vessels whose exterior surfaces are extended into invisible planes in space—implicitly, third cups—by stubby rows of equal-length, blunted silver wires, the pieces clearly bait desire. The frosty white interiors are alluring but off–limits to fingers that would damage their fragile oxide finish. The shiny exteriors, covered in candylike translucent enamel, are even more seductive, and even more obviously untouchable. Inspired by menacing seed pods encountered on the Konza prairie in Kansas, the prickly cups are maddening, threatening to the very hands that their glassy surfaces entice. As in her other vessels, Perkins employs the physical surfaces of her "Triple Cups" to disrupt a figurative superficiality. By making the works impossible to grasp easily, she has therefore transformed them from simple attractive objects to

Western Offering, 2001
silver, enamel, pearls, 18k gold
contents: rose petals, sage, charcoal
2 x 5 x 10"

symbols of frustrated desire. The only surfaces of the "Triple Cups" that can be touched, the tips of the projecting wires, are neither particularly desirable nor even proper surfaces.

Perkins's explorations of material desire and the less tangible desire for ceremony also became the subjects of two more recent series, begun in the fall of 2001 following her return from an emotionally moving trip to India. The "Itradans," the first of these series, consists of trays bearing sets of three small enameled-silver cups, the gold-leaf interiors of which contain powdered minerals or substances such as rose petals, sage, or charcoal. While the purpose of these ensembles is not specified, their inspiration is in the groups of small bowls containing powdered pigments that Perkins observed in the entryways of some Indian homes. Accompanying her vessels are long, slender forged gold or silver implements—spatulas, tweezers, or simple rods—suggesting a myriad of possible applications but committing to nothing definite. The implication of a ritualistic purpose is critical, but the actual use to which the sets might be put is tendentiously ambiguous. Perkins's goal is to elicit through her work an elusive desire for meaning. Above all, the conceptual aim of her vessels is not a positive presence but a sense of perpetual lack, a need that cannot be fulfilled any more than it can be ignored.

This sense of lack is explored more directly in another recent series, the "Beggars' Bowls," enamel-on-copper vessels that address a more immediate, physical need. Related to Perkins's observation of the effects of poverty in India, these pieces assume a certain morally contemplative tone and are equally about human ingenuity, the ability to put discarded objects to an effective use. "I was thinking about people who are desperately poor but may have one possession that keeps them alive," she explains; "something that was once fine and is still functional, but in a way that might be different from its original purpose." To suggest both deterioration and restoration in her "Beggars'

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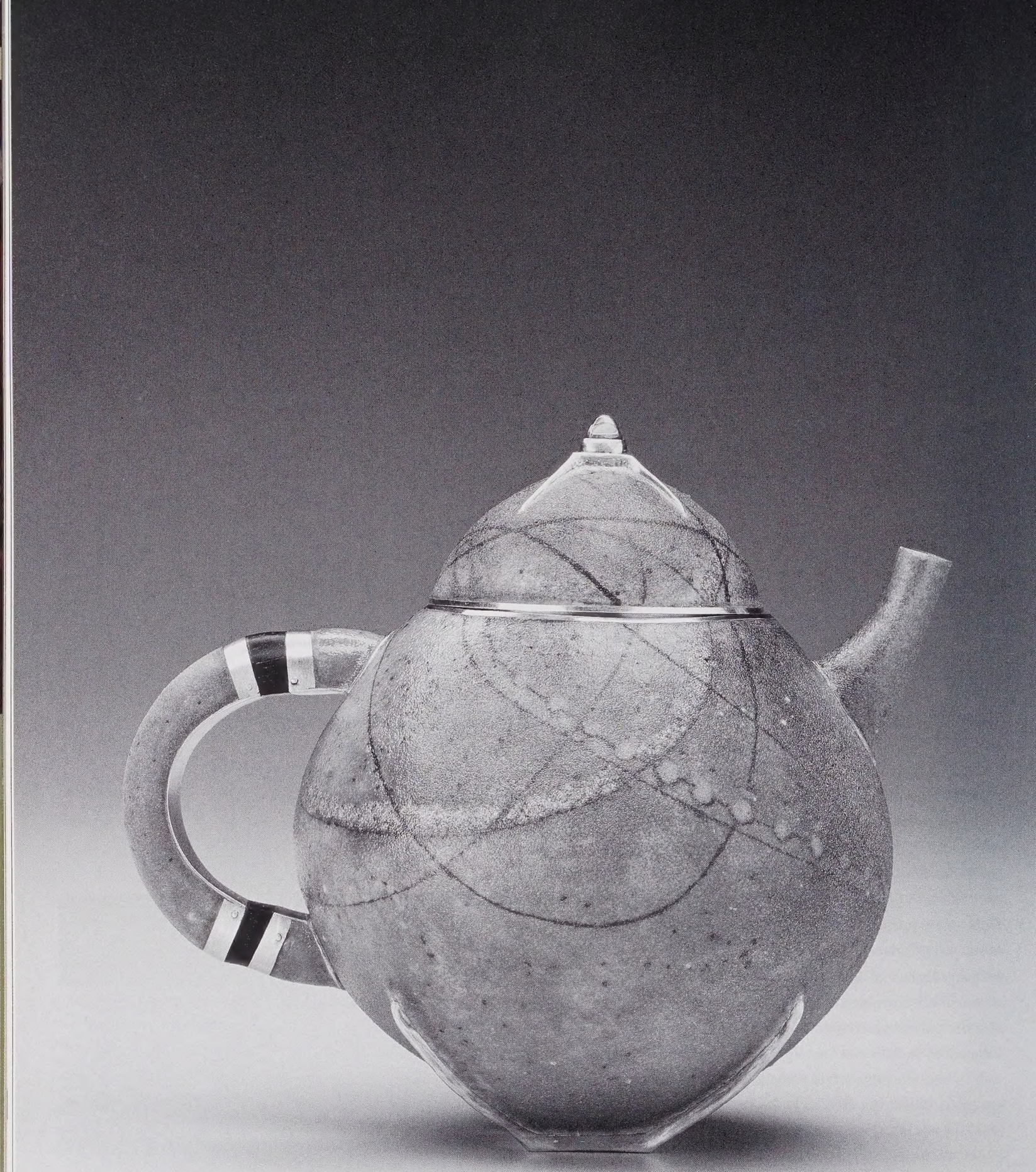
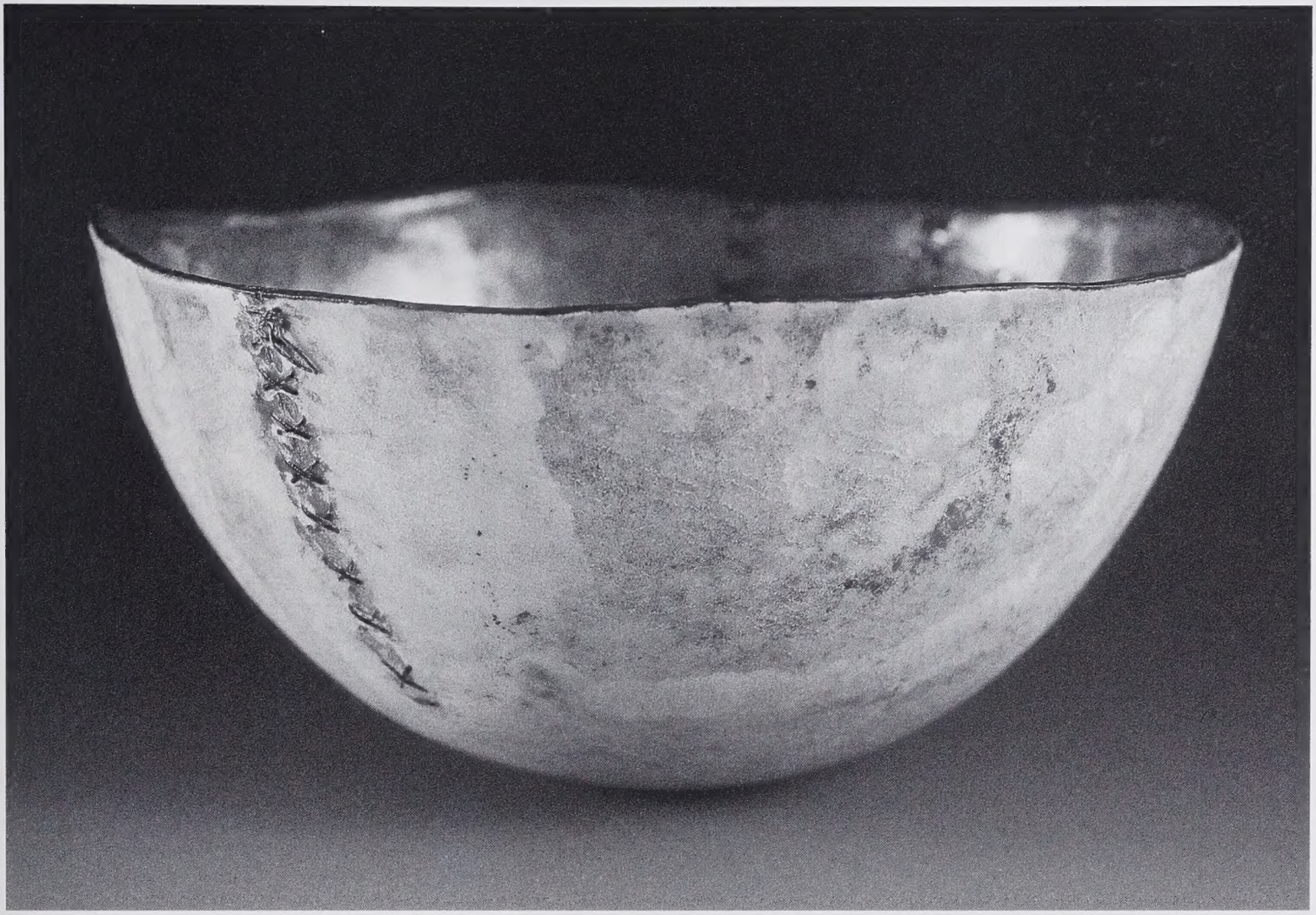


Mae (teapot), 2000
silver, enamel, ebony, citrine
5 1/2 x 8 x 4"
Photo: Tom Davis



Calabash Beggar's Bowl, 2001
copper, enamel
3 x 6 1/2 x 7"

Bowls," Perkins has variously cut slits into the rims or punched holes in the walls, then sutured these wounds with copper wire, leaving the sharp points to project outward in thorny fields or to converge inward into treacherous nests of spikes. The exterior surfaces, in which sand or pumice has been added to the underfired enamel, seem roughly weathered—far from precious in a material sense, although their implicit use as beggar's bowls suggests their indispensability to those who daily tread the narrow path skirting death.

To attempt to combat the stereotype of enamelware's superficiality simply by using the medium to reflect upon poverty and hunger would, as Perkins is the first to acknowledge, be itself only a superficial gesture. If her most recent series draws its initial inspiration from actual beggars' bowls, it does not attempt to imitate them visually any more than it pretends to offer itself for real utilitarian purposes. The reference to Perkins's experiences in India is only a starting point for a more profound violation of the enamelware surface, one that has its primary impact upon the use of the medium itself. In all her work the recurring subject is lack—lack of ceremony, lack of seriousness, lack of accessibility, lack of material requisites—and this lack is presented as eternal, insurmountable. The conceptual effect is that her work seems less about presence—the immediate, indulgent, satisfying but ultimately only material presence of traditional decorative enamelware—than about a vague but gnawing absence. Enamel is made to associate with issues inherently unresolved rather than with hardened clichés, and to reveal unfulfillable desire as a fruitful point of departure. ⧗

Glen R. Brown is associate professor of art history at Kansas State University.

COMMISSIONS

by Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman

Andy Cooperman, *Sargasso Server*, 2002

Andy Cooperman's *Sargasso Server*, a contemporary sterling silver fish slice, evokes life in the sea. The blade resembles a squid's tapering, almost conical head, trailed by silver and gold "tentacles" that form the handle. These long, interwoven strands of metal also suggest tangles of kelp, or sargassum weed. The transitional piece between handle and blade imitates the flared movement of a jellyfish and the nodular texture of a sea urchin. A Seattle metalsmith who works primarily as a jeweler, Cooperman received this commission from local collector Benton Seymour Rabinovitch after years of association through the Seattle Metals Guild. Rabinovitch's renowned collection of antique bladed silver servers has grown to include pieces commissioned from contemporary metalsmiths. The collector required only that the new server be primarily sterling silver and weigh at least 10 ounces. Instead of designing hollowware, Cooperman decided to construct the server's handle by weaving together long tapered strips of 16-gauge sterling silver. He rolled each strip against an incised steel pattern to impart a striated texture. To establish the handle's general shape, he twined several larger strips into an elongated spiral, then threaded in smaller strips to build dense

Andy Cooperman
Sargasso Server, 2002
sterling silver, 18k gold, diamond, grey pearl
length: 13 1/2"
Commissioned by Benton Seymour Rabinovitch

layers, obscuring the void at the handle's core and encouraging visual investigation. Cooperman replicated a silver tendril and replaced it with an 18-karat gold copy to create the striking gold tendril that curls around the handle's tapered tip. He fabricated the blade from 14-gauge sterling sheet and added a cast 18-karat gold bolster, inset with a small diamond. After soldering the piece repeatedly to ensure stability, Cooperman burnished all edges, wire-brushed the surface, and oxidized the server black. This unusually dark-toned silver distinguishes *Sargasso Server* in Rabinovitch's notable collection.

Linda MacNeil, *Water Leaf*, "Floral Necklace Series," 2001

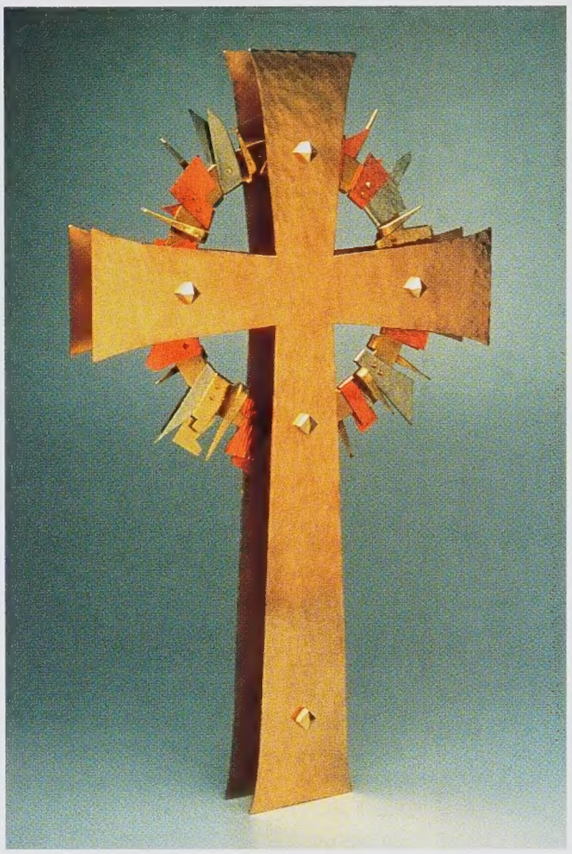
Pam Johnson began collecting Linda MacNeil's necklaces and earrings in 1995, intrigued by their interplay between gold and glass. When MacNeil planned a retrospective book of her jewelry designs, she turned to her collectors for assistance with publishing costs. In appreciation for Johnson's contribution, MacNeil created a necklace that honored her client's love of gardening. *Water Leaf* evolved from MacNeil's vision for a *Floral Series* in which a pod or a flower in full bloom inspired necklace design. MacNeil gave Johnson drawings and glass and metal samples for the pendant, and discussed with her its scale, weight, balance, and mechanical connections to the chain. The resulting pendant suggests new plant life emerging from the surface of a placid lake or pond. MacNeil accomplishes this illusion by using two contrasting types and colors of glass, each edged by 24-karat gold-plated brass. An oval of black vitrolite plate glass represents the water element, its opaque surface striated as if rippled by wind. Organic buds of yellow-green *pâte de verre* glass bloom above the water. MacNeil cut and shaped the black vitrolite with machinery and polished it with acid. To create the translucent *pâte de verre*, she melted small chunks of green and yellow glass together in molds in a kiln, then refined the cast glass with hand working and acid polishing. Gold-plated brass edging frames the *pâte de verre* buds and curls outward, twining into links in the chain. Since receiving *Water Leaf*, Johnson has delighted in the unique necklace that "reminds me of my koi pond with its irises, grasses, and other water plants" outside her study window.

Linda MacNeil
Water Leaf, "Floral Necklace Series," 2001
black vitrolite, green-yellow cast glass, 24k gold-plated brass
pendant/brooch: height 3"
Commissioned by Pam Johnson
Photo: Bill Truslow

Chris Ramsay, *Genesis*, 2001

An abstract sculpture of bronze and granite commemorates Gary McCalla's leadership as editor of *Southern Living* magazine from 1969 to 1991. During his tenure, the magazine grew from uncertain beginnings to a thriving regional publication with national readership. After McCalla's death in 2001, the magazine's publisher, Birmingham, Alabama-based Southern Progress Corporation, decided to recognize his contributions with a granite memorial sculpture to be installed at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Southern Progress sought an Oklahoma artist for the commission, in honor of McCalla's birthplace. After searching the Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition's slide registry, the company approached metalsmith and professor Chris Ramsay with the opportunity. Ramsay designed *Genesis* to suggest renewed life and growth, alluding to both the botanical garden setting and McCalla's role in developing *Southern Living*. Like a flame or budding leaf, a slender bronze form emerges from the sculpture's softly contoured granite base. The base comprises several bands of Oklahoma "autumn rose" granite, held together by internal support rods and separated by rings of bronze sheet. Ramsay embellished these rings with cast bronze circles, symbolic of the natural cycle of life, and repousséd and chased bronze leaves, recalling the cottonwood trees McCalla loved as a child. Ramsay's main challenge in fabricating *Genesis* was overcoming the density and weight of granite, a material he had never sculpted. With the aid of a student whose family owns a monument company, Ramsay learned to use diamond wet wheels to cut granite efficiently. *Genesis* was dedicated at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens in December 2001, in a ceremony attended by McCalla's family.

Chris Ramsay
Genesis, 2001
granite and bronze
48 x 18 x 12"
Commissioned by Southern Progress Corporation
Assistant: Casey Crowdis
Photo: Van Chaplin and Kenner Patton/*Southern Living* magazine



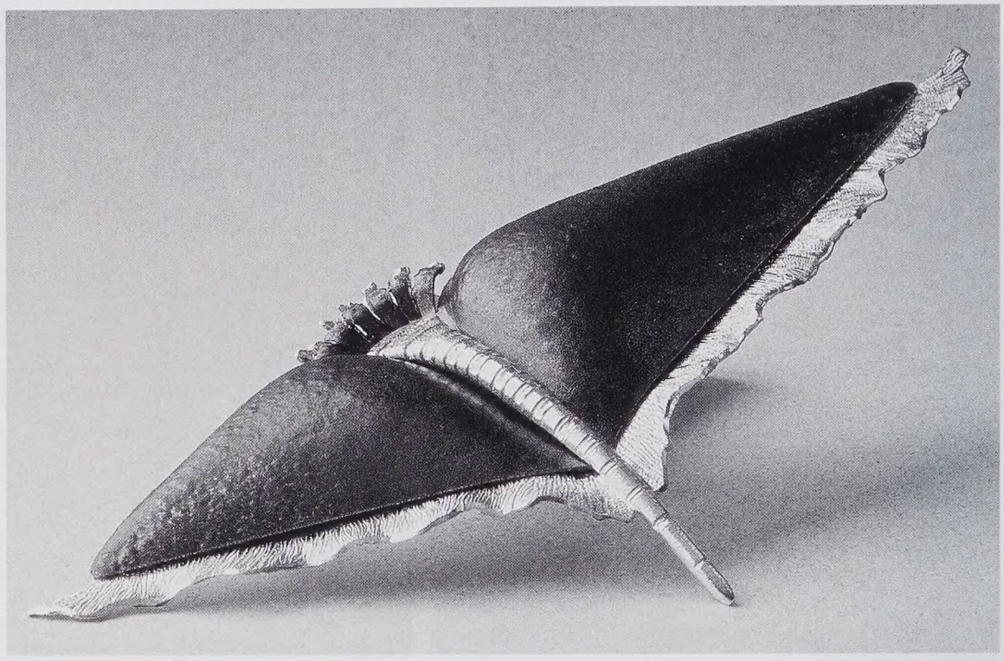
Anna Loney
Processional Cross, 2002
bronze, brass, copper, nickel silver
24 x 15 x 2 "
Commissioned by East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh
Assistant: Angie Lehman
Photo: David Smith

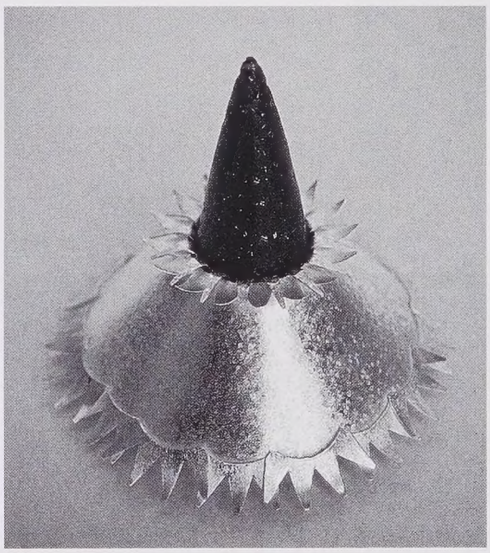
Anna Loney, *Processional Cross*, 2002

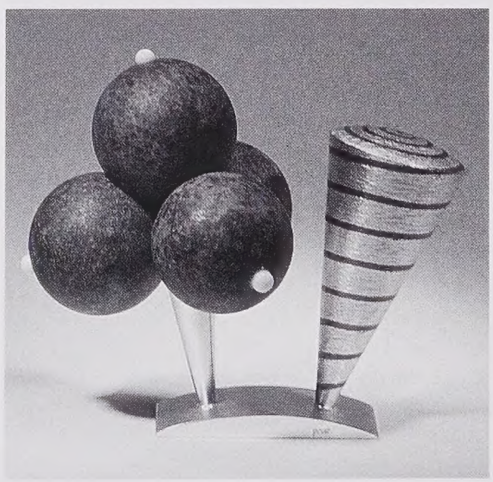
Pittsburgh's East Liberty Presbyterian Church commissioned its first processional cross to honor its retiring senior pastor. Built in the 1930s with funding from the Richard Mellon family, East Liberty Presbyterian is a traditional Gothic-style church that dominates an entire city block in Pittsburgh's East End. When the congregation's arts and music committee rejected commercially available processional crosses, members decided to commission a local metalsmith for the project. The committee chose Anna Loney, whose portfolio included previous liturgical metalwork. Emphasizing the church's commitment to building a multiracial, multicultural congregation, the arts committee asked Loney to design a cross symbolizing diversity, using metals of different color and texture. After two months of review, the committee approved Loney's design for a contemporary bronze cross supporting a "corona" of colored metal shards. Because a solid-metal cross would be too heavy to carry in procession, Loney created this cross from two identical cruciform shapes secured together across a two-inch space by brass hardware. Within this space, the artist suspended a brass corona bearing shards of forged brass, copper, and nickel silver. These metal fragments of different shapes and colors symbolize communities around the world, as well as the wealth of resources the earth provides. Loney forged the two crosses from 18-gauge bronze sheet and planished both the cross forms and metal fragments to achieve various textures. East Liberty Presbyterian's congregation received its first *Processional Cross* with joy at Easter 2002. Each week a different parishioner carries the cross to the altar during worship services.

Elizabeth Broadrup Lieberman is a freelance writer living in Michigan.

For more information and guidelines about submitting commissions to *Metalsmith* visit www.snagmetalsmith.org.







"ARCTIC 5: CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY AND METALSMITHING FROM NORTHERN NORWAY"

VELVET DA VINCI, SAN FRANCISCO
MAY 10–JUNE 9, 2002

by JENNIFER CROSS GANS

When metalsmiths think of Norwegian jewelry, Tone Vigeland, *plique á jour* enamels, wedding crowns, folk jewelry, and Viking body adornments probably come to mind. But few may know what (if anything) distinguishes this area's work from that of the rest of Scandinavia.

Indeed, contemporary Norwegian metalwork is not well known in this country, so it was both a pleasure and an education to see the work of five artists on display at San Francisco's Velvet da Vinci. All five have homes and studios north of the Arctic Circle, and despite extreme diversity of style, all explored one or more of the distinctive influences of their homeland's landscape and culture.

Norway's famous blue fjords and rugged icecaps are reflected in some of the work by Trude Selnes. Her sleek, sculptured pieces in fabricated silver and glass are inspired by sea, waves, and shells. These lovely small ornaments are also mini containers, opening to reveal hidden, internal forms.

Anita Schmid draws inspiration from marine life, creating neckpieces and pins of oversize bugs and other sea creatures in thin silver and brilliant blue-purple titanium. Their startling effect is achieved through careful embossing, chasing, and repoussé, as well as Schmid's special methods of coloring the titanium.

Norway's folk costumes clearly inspire two other artists, Ingrid Larssen and Inger Blix Kvammen. Larssen created a series of silk ruffs and collars, some as elaborately pleated as any Elizabethan courtier's, occasionally accented with small copper or silver ornaments. On the wearer they are light, supple, and shifting, creating a look that manages to be both modest and flamboyant.

Inger Blix Kvammen creates head, neck, shoulder, and wrist ornaments in finely crocheted silver and copper, sometimes in combination with freshwater pearls. Some are demure, almost Victorian in flavor. Others, called "nests" by the artist, are wispy, chaotic, and joyfully romantic, seemingly woven by birds drunk on love or stoned on LSD.

The fifth artist, Peter Rust, one of the best known of the group, was born and trained in Switzerland, though he currently lives in Norway, close to the Finnish border. Widely exhibited in Europe, Rust's work is also more European in flavor. His rings are mini-sculptures, freestanding on a flat base which forms the bottom of the shank, and feature ingeniously balanced silver hollow forms, accented in copper, glass, or (again, blue) dumortierite.

It is worth noting that despite the isolation in which these artists work, they receive considerable help from their government and professional groups such as the Sami Artist Association. American metal artists—relentlessly exposed to the bracing but not always genial winds of the free enterprise system—should be so lucky as to receive the kind of assistance enjoyed by their northern European counterparts.

Jennifer Cross Gans is a studio jeweler and writer in San Francisco.

clockwise from above
Anita Schmid
Sea Brooch, 2001
sterling silver, titanium
5 x 2 3/8"

Peter Rust
Ring, 1999
sterling silver, copper, glass, dumortierite
2 1/4 x 2 1/2 x 1 1/2"

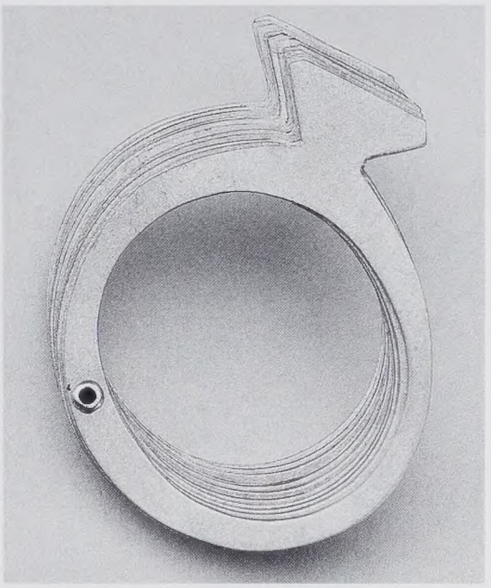
Inger Blix Kvammen
Silver Nest with Blue Pearls (neckpiece), 2002
sterling silver, blue freshwater pearls
2 3/4 x 12 1/2"

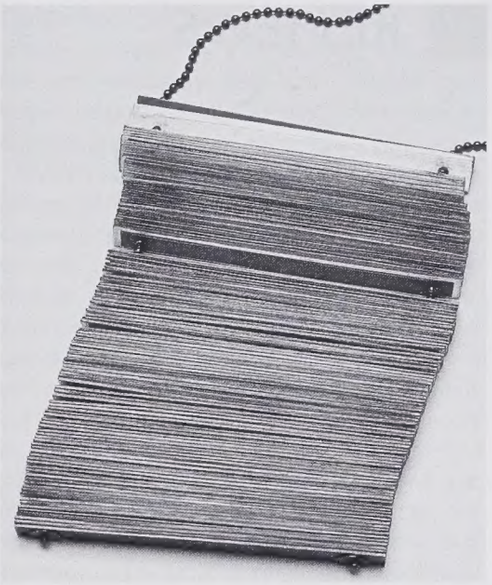
Trude Selnes
Blooming, 1999
sterling silver, green glass
6 x 6 x 5"

"ALYSSA DEE KRAUSS: BINDINGS"

SIENNA GALLERY, LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS
JULY 25–AUGUST 20, 2002

by CYNTHIA EID





Alyssa Dee Krauss has opened a new chapter in her metalwork. Her investigations into language have expanded and evolved. This body of work steps away from fairy tales, which have been a recurrent theme for Krauss, and moves toward a more realistic view of life's contradictions and quandaries. The jewelry in this exhibition is an homage to the book as metaphor. Like books, much of the work deals with illusions of reality. The book is an excellent vehicle for Krauss; a book shows time, change, and progression as the pages are turned.

Nearly all of the jewelry has parts that move, unfold, or open—delighting the senses, as well as tickling the intellect with double entendres. The work is thoughtfully conceived, playful, and well crafted. All the jewelry is light and comfortable to wear, as Krauss has used thin silver and gold sheet metal with a soft matte finish, evoking the pages of books.

The one heavy piece of jewelry in the exhibition is an engaging necklace titled *The Book of Revelation*. The very long chain puts the "book" level with the wearer's genitals. First, one sees the oxidized edges of a stack of sheaves strung on the chain. Spreading the leaves reveals layers of red between the white pages. It is typical of this body of work that each piece may be perceived and enjoyed at multiple levels—visual, tactile, playful, and intellectual. The jewelry in this exhibition involves the wearer, offering choices about how to wear it and play with it while contemplating the artist's intentions.

The Book of Almosts is a gold ring composed of cutout silhouettes that are riveted together in one spot, so that the "pages" swivel around. No matter how the wearer tries to line them up, they won't. They can't—quite. Furthermore, though the silhouette gives the impression of a solitaire ring with a large, central faceted stone, upon closer scrutiny one sees that the shape of the stone is not entirely defined.

Two sterling rings, *Volumes I* and *II* of *The Book of the Impossible Choices*, also present dilemmas. There is a natural urge to try to find a favorite page, but they are all the same—blank. There is also an urge to try to find the point of balance, where the book will stay open—impossible. Regardless of what choice you make, though, the end is always bleak, since both end pages are black. The ring-book is constructed so that the end pages are actually the same page, so the book ends the same no matter where you start, or which direction is chosen.

The Book of Letting Go is a quietly intriguing piece. At first, it appeared to be a geometric-architectural ring, but like most of these works, it needs to be held, worn, and investigated to be fully appreciated. The ring presents a quandary: when you pick it up and pull it open, its interior structure and booklike qualities are revealed. Yet, when you let go, the book closes, hiding its secrets; usually, "letting go" means being more open and communicative.

The Book of Reminders is a pair of earrings for someone who lives by lists and bulletin boards. A stack of silver "notes" is held to the ear by a sterling silver pushpin (with a round end to the ear post rather than a sharp tack). The "clutch" is a square of cork bulletin board.

The four gold rings in "The Ring that Binds" series bear close examination. *The Book of Let Me Count the Ways* is comprised of countless tiny leaves of gold that slip over an inner core in an unending circle of pages. The owner of this ring could while away many hours trying to figure out if s/he loves me; s/he loves me not.

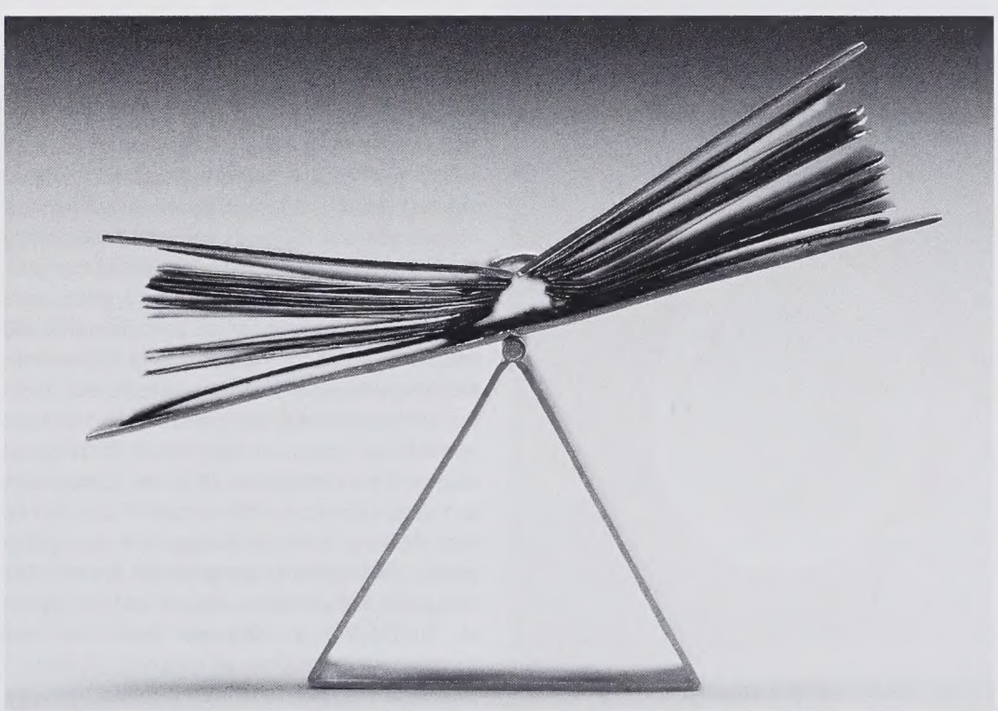
It was a pleasure to study this body of work and share in Alyssa Dee Krauss's delight in books and jewelry's ability to represent ideas. I look forward to seeing the next edition in this new volume of work.

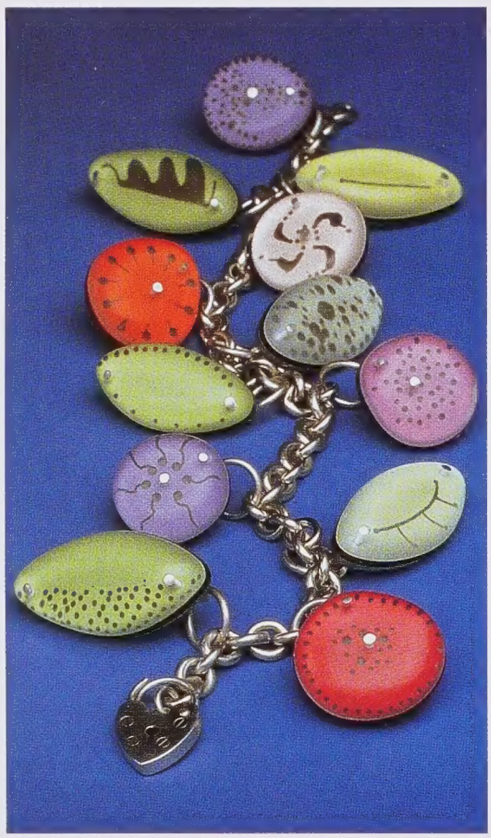
Cynthia Eid is a studio jeweler-silversmith residing in Lexington, Massachusetts.

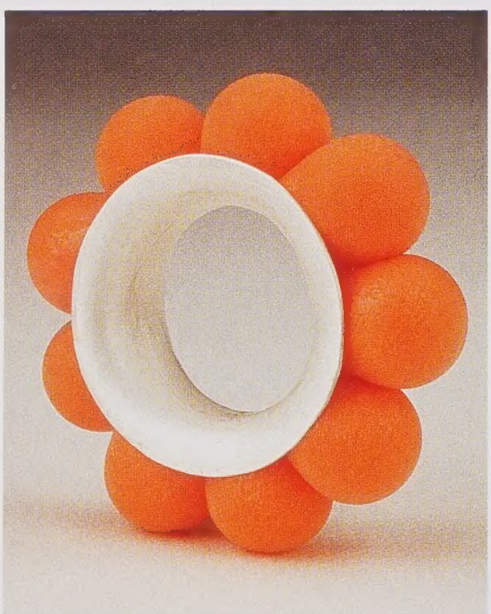
clockwise from top left
The Book of Almosts (ring), 2002
from "The Ring That Binds" series
18k gold
$1\ 1/8 \times 1\ 3/8 \times 3/16$"

The Book of Revelations (neckpiece), 2002
sterling silver, mixed media
pendant: $3 \times 3 \times 1/4$"; length 50"

The Book of Impossible Choices, Volume 1 (ring), 2002
sterling silver
$2\ 1/4 \times 1\ 1/2 \times 1/2$"







"MATERIALS AND COLOR"

GALERIE NOEL GUYOMARC'H, MONTREAL, QUEBEC
MAY 5-JUNE 15, 2002

OXOXO GALLERY, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
JUNE 22-AUGUST 15, 2002

SCULPTURE TO WEAR, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA
SEPTEMBER 7-OCTOBER 12, 2002

PRIME GALLERY, TORONTO, ONTARIO
NOVEMBER 28, 2002 - JANUARY 11, 2003

by R. BELLA RABINOVITCH

"Materials and Color" presents the work of 21 jewelry artists who share an ability to undermine our preconceived notions about what makes something precious. Plastic earplugs, Formica, vinyl lacing, and felt, to name a few of the materials encountered in this exhibition, are transformed into objects with value as adornment and conveyors of meaning. They also remind us that color can emerge from unexpected processes and placements. Bits of thread, rice, glass, and gold are democratically unified in a human-made spectrum.

Exhibition curator Noel Guyomarc'h's selection of seven Americans, thirteen Canadians and one British artist is not governed by their use of nontraditional materials, but rather their ability to employ quite traditional materials such as gold, silver, and gems in unexpected ways, and to wed them convincingly to what are often deemed throwaway objects. Hybridity is a key to this exhibition that asks us important questions about the world we inhabit and the art forms that have marked our place in that world throughout history. For example, Joan Parcher appropriates and covers the concentric circles of a tin can lid with differing tones of orange, blue, and green vitreous enamel to create a vibrant brooch. The categories of painting, sculpture, and jewelry are all fulfilled and recycled here for our contemporary world.

Efharis Alepedis employs a similar strategy, this time exploring the modernist penchant for serialization. A pendant made of nine orange plastic foam earplugs arranged in a vertical row is set on a sterling silver base and suspended from a blue waxed thread; she also uses the same plugs for earrings and brooches. The orange humps are set in different configurations revealing the complexity and vivacity of the original plug form. Alepedis offsets the ten predominantly orange works with two boxed ring series titled "Specimens from Nature." Rings made from organic materials such as corn kernels, moss, and pinecones, too delicate to wear, engage in a dialogue with the approachable, easily wearable foam works.

The theme of nature is also examined by several other artists. They ask us to assess human-made replications of nature as in the case of Maria Phillips, or to witness the mixing of the organic and inorganic, as in the work of Catherine Bechard and Alyssa Dee Krauss. Paul McClure's "Cell Series" presents a microscopic view of nature, featuring brooches with subtitles such as *Virus* or *Chromosome* set out in petri dishes. Sarah Crawford addresses nature manifested in sterling silver, Formica, and acrylic. She also manages to ask important questions about gender identity and politics in her technically complex works. In *May Your Garden Grow*, a charm bracelet that at first seems innocuous reveals a charm with an image of a swastika turning into a snake, daintily cut out of the acrylic-covered Formica.

Anne Fauteux, Joseé Desjardins, Daniel Jocz, and Vivienne Jones present works that explore the nature of jewelry itself. Fauteux has the acronym BOLM (Bureau des objets lyriques migrateurs) etched into the silver clasps of her felt necklaces; it translates as the Office for Traveling Lyrical Works, a self-conscious statement of her view of jewelry.

If theorist Ellen Dissanayake is correct that art is borne out of our need to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary to mark special occasions, then the selection of artists in this exhibition is apt and successful. They celebrate the complexity of living, rising from our initial cell form through the various levels of initiation and passage. They adapt and adopt eclectic materials that they have encountered on their journey and now color our collective memories.

R. Bella Rabinovitch, an art historian who specializes in contemporary art, teaches at Marianopolis College and Concordia University in Montreal.

clockwise from above
Joan Parcher
Tin Can Brooch, 2001
vitreous enamel on tin can lid
5 x 3 x 1/8"
Photo: James Beards

Efharis Alepedis
Ring, 2001
sterling silver, earplugs
1 1/4 x 1 1/4 x 1/4"
Photo: Mark Johnston

Sarah Crawford
May Your Garden Grow (charm bracelet), 2002
sterling silver, Formica, acrylic
7 1/2 x 3 1/4 x 1/4"
Photo: R. Strout

"HARRIETE ESTEL BERMAN: IDENTITY"

THE SYBARIS GALLERY, ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN
SEPTEMBER 14–OCTOBER 12, 2002

by SUSAN HOLT

Harriete Estel Berman's work has always had persistent roots in feminism, and once again she uses a distinctly female perspective. This time, however, she addresses the issues of consumerism, commodification, and identity construction through our purchase choices. Using her signature material, preprinted steel obtained from reclaimed tin containers, she has meticulously, often marvelously, fabricated an impressive group of works. Her solo show fills the gallery space with a barrage of color, pattern, images, and text transformed into chairs, cups and saucers, various objects, and plus-sized jewelry. Dodging the sensuous clamor is required for adequately seeing the work, as Berman has deftly inserted her messages within the apparently decorative veneer of common objects. Each piece is, in fact, entirely constructed of its previously consumed surface. As many as several hundred individual metal segments are chosen for aesthetic impact and relevant content, then formed and assembled. Every detail is purposeful, and the whole becomes a play of double and triple entendres, fluid conversations between the material, its source, its editing, and its form. The work must be literally as well as visually read, inspected on the inside and underside as well as the immediate facade to fully appreciate the artist's intent. To this end the several artist's statements also proved useful.

One of three full-scale chairs in the exhibit, *Consuming Identity* hangs iconlike on the wall. The ladder back of the chair is composed as a bar code, which is echoed in the fabric pattern on the chair seat. Berman envisions the bar code as symbolic of our unconscious consumption of identity. This concept is most graphically presented in her large neckpieces combining tin and acrylic. Here jewelry, a classic signifier of status, uses the bar code to reflect identity lost, or sought, by the wearer. Unfortunately, these pieces are so visually enticing that the effect becomes as much decorative as didactic.

Identity Complex, a vanity stool, takes aim at the construction of female identity in particular. Crafted from cookie tins and other tasty evils, it initially presents us with selected images of feminine perfection. Only when viewed from below does it reveal the destructive internal dialogues generated by marketing.

With *Consuming Conversation*, an evolving edition of precariously stacked tea cups, and *Consuming Good Taste*, a teapot, Berman chooses to address the issue of consumption through nostalgia: ladies sipping from delicate, floral china, grandmother's porcelain tea set. The teapot stands out as the single most effective piece in the show. It addresses, if perhaps inadvertently, not just consumption in the name of improved status or identity but also the consumption of fine art. Made from tins that feature reproductions of familiar paintings, the teapot alludes to art's role in conferring and confirming elite social position and indisputable good taste. The piece, ironically self-referential, admits to an understanding of art's collusion in conspicuous consumption, conscious or otherwise.

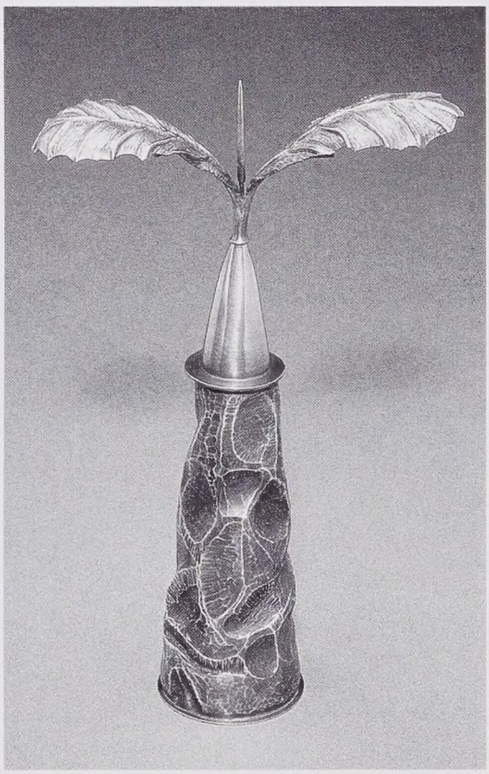
This is sexy work with an agenda. Berman hopes this work "transforms the viewer's awareness of their participation and challenges their own complacency" in the commodification of life and identity. It's a commendable cause—but it's also a Faustian bargain when art or craft calls commodity into question. Artists have always survived by, and their credibility as cultural arbiters been mediated by, their market value and the status of their patrons. Might an artist be thought of as a brand, that is, a distinctive style with periodic innovations and expanding product line, striving for greater market share? Very few artists have seriously thwarted or even subverted the commodification of their work, though many modern artists have claimed that as their mission. Berman herself acknowledges something of this predicament in *Floating World*, comprised of three Japanese lanterns and an extensive wall text documenting the similarities between the contemporary art world-gallery system and the decadent opulence of the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter in seventeenth-century Japan. Witty and erudite, this piece offers a provocative and timely critique of current artistic practice.

Susan Holt is an artist and metalsmith who lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

clockwise from left
Consuming Identity, 2001
preprinted steel from recycled tin containers, fabric seat
51 x 19 1/2 x 10"

Consuming Good Taste, 1999
preprinted steel from recycled tin containers, aluminum and brass rivets
11 x 11 1/2"

Identity Complex, 2002
preprinted steel from recycled tin containers, sterling silver and 10k gold rivets
18 1/2 x 16 x 16"



"DISPLAY USE ONLY"

KIRKLAND ARTS CENTER, KIRKLAND, WASHINGTON
JULY 11–AUGUST 2, 2002

by MATTHEW KANGAS

Susan Myers's recent curated-and-juried exhibition, "Display Use Only," reflects all the virtues and problems common to this type of artist-organized show. Artists from the Seattle area, Oregon, California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Georgia, all chosen on the basis of submitted slides, were interpolated with nine invited artists from Virginia, New York, Wisconsin, and North Carolina. Regardless of the outcome—and there were some stunning works on view—the idea of curatorial groupings decided by artists instead of decorative arts or contemporary art curators symbolizes how the American metals community (as well as ceramics, wood, and fibers) is a self-isolating one, highly preoccupied with mutual recognition and maintaining a falsely reassuring reinforcement of the status quo.

"Display Use Only" was no exception. Inspired by a tea set Myers sent to yet another themed group show, "Display Use Only" hardly treads new ground. The dilemma of fine metalwork being neither truly functional nor adequately large to qualify as fine art sculpture is once again turned into an asset by the usual suspects, and remains, as Myers notes, in a "type of limbo—between craft and 'fine art'—between use and uselessness."

To be fair, there are so many different groupings within the exhibit that one must look more closely to determine if Myers's "limbo" really exists. For example, there is nothing useless, nonfunctional, or sculptural about much of the work, including necklaces by Julia Barello, Sarah Hood, and Margaret Yaukey, or rings by Jana Brevick and Amie Plante, or bracelets by Donna D'Aquino and Patty Cokus. They stand on their own as polished ornament for the body.

Dismissing that part of Myers's concept, what about her claim that "fine art" is the extreme pole of "uselessness?" Such simplistic thinking is endemic to many of these kinds of shows. Part invitational, part juried by slide, how could they ever present a coherent theme?

What Myers calls "displayed objects—not object(s) of utility" fail to attain sculptural status. Lynda LaRoche's *Mountain Estate Teapot*, Yeh Ying's *Find the Way Before You Leave*, a sterling silver puzzle box, and Lynn Whitford's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, her tiresomely familiar bottles all in a row on a shelf, are well made practical things. However, Hye-young Suh's *Infinite 1* comes close to small-scale sculpture, a sleek silver column with orange plastic inserts. Tom Walden's *Beetle Tea Infuser* is unusual and eccentric-looking enough to attract interest, as are Jennifer Crupi's *Degrees of Certainty—Gesture Server* and Nancy Megan Corwin's *Copper Canyon*.

Setting aside other sculptural pretensions, the more straightforward, quasi-functional works take on a greater honesty and proudly crafted humility. The world's fanciest handmade *Pizza Cutter with 'Easy Rider' Suspension* by Frankie Flood would definitely find a place in my bachelor's kitchen, as would Dana Roth's silver-and-plastic carving knife. Five small *Running Cups* by Gail Ralston are perfect liqueur containers, although one would have trouble using Rebecca Scheer's altered knives, forks, and spoons.

Myers's curatorial statements that metal's "new role is to be displayed" and its "diminishing role of functionality," and the "new 'collectible' status of these objects" are hardly new concepts either. Look at what 20 years of the eccentric teapot did to American ceramics! "Collectibility" is not an aesthetic concept and goes nowhere near explaining the confusing yet compelling power of these objects. There is a case to be made for them—their astonishing craftsmanship, their beauty, their ambiguous, hybrid status—but this exhibit fails to deliver on that level.

Matthew Kangas, an art critic living in Seattle, is a contributing editor for *Art in America*, *Sculpture*, and *GLASS*.

clockwise from above
Gail Ralston
Running Cups, 2002
fine and sterling silver
3 1/2 x 2 x 2" each

Tom Walden
Beetle Tea Infuser and Stand
sterling silver
9 1/4 x 4"

Nancy Megan Corwin
Copper Canyon (vessel with lid and hair pin), 2002
10 x 2 x 6"
Photo: Doug Yaple

"MEDITATIONS IN METAL: KOREAN ART JEWELRY AND HOLLOWWARE"

MOBILIA GALLERY, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
AUGUST 22–SEPTEMBER 21, 2002

by KATHERINE INGRAHAM

clockwise from above
Jae-young Kim
Rhythm of the Rain (brooch), 2002
bamboo, jade, ivory, silver
5 x 3/5 x 1/5"

Yun-ryoung Lee
Metonymy of Nature V-I & II (brooches), 2002
silver, dried flower, diamond, epoxy
2 x 2"; 2 1/3 x 1 1/2"

Jee-hyun Hwang
"Painting Relief" series (brooches), 2001
silver, acrylic color on wood
2 5/8 x 2 2/5 x 3/4"
2 1/3 x 3 1/3 x 1"
2 3/4 x 2 5/8 x 4/5"

Young-kwan Jung
The Quiet Festival (teapot), 2002
sterling silver, blackwood
9 1/2 x 10 1/8 x 4 7/8"

"Meditations in Metal" is the first U.S. show for curator Myung-ok Jeon, who selected 21 emerging and established artists, most affiliated with universities in South Korea, some with strong ties to the U.S. and Europe. While presenting a broad view of Korean metalsmithing in terms of technique, materials, and the extent to which the artists have adopted Western aesthetic concerns, this could also be viewed as a fairly cohesive theme show. Many of the artists base their work on traditional Korean naturalistic motifs such as the flower, lattice, and butterfly and other animals, each with a long history of deeply understood cultural associations. With the exception of a few necklaces, most of the pieces were brooches. I was curious to see if work with underlying political content would be presented—the reverberations from a split Korea, for example—but, according to Jeon, this type of issue would not typically be addressed by craft artists or within the realm of jewelry. This in and of itself suggests the adoption of Western visual language more than its conceptual framework.

My first impression upon entering the gallery was of a natural history exhibit, perhaps a rare butterfly collection. The jewelry was displayed in wooden cases lined with fabric, with many brooches mounted slightly off the surface, adding to the effect. A subtle, rich color palette reflected the variety of natural materials incorporated into the work. Jeon notes, "naturalism and unity with nature are central concerns of Korean craftspeople." Aside from Soo-won Hong, Myung-joo Lee, and Komelia Hongja Okim's relatively minimal work, pieces employed diverse miniature elements arranged to make formal compositions laden with symbolic meaning and, almost incidentally, beauty.

Jae-young Kim combines the traditional wedding materials of coral, jade, and amber with antique ivory and silver to create brooches that seem more like musical instruments than jewelry. The oxidized silver framework that supports each composition is largely invisible to the viewer until picked up and held. The form it takes is consequential, but equally compelling visually. *Rhythm of the Rain* invokes the realistic sound of bamboo tumbling onto tile floors. On the other end of the spectrum, Yun-ryoung Lee presents a traditional image via a modern aesthetic, laminating flowers onto silver and setting them with diamonds. Both as a rosette and in a pot, the flower motif is seen frequently in this show, but it is surprising and slightly thrilling to see the actual petals preserved in vibrant color. It feels a little like cheating to capture something this ephemeral, but I'm glad she did.

Jee-hyun Hwang and Hee-seung Koh work with an abstract visual language that moves towards the sculptural. Hwang's "Painting Relief" series of brooches is comprised of gestural silver "line drawings" on painted wood compositions. A subset of Koh's *36 Pieces of Weight* is presented, architectural studies that play with relative visual weight; these toy-like brooches are the most three-dimensional in the show.

Slightly disappointing is that the brooch form, while potentially free from the constraints of weight and scale, doesn't interact with the body in a more tactile and sensual way. So many of these pieces invite touch; I yearn for the jade and horn to warm on the skin, but this is an outside concern and not relevant to the largely symbolic function of these pieces.

It's not that the hollowware pieces aren't stunning, or that the display doesn't give them equal weight—they are and it does. The pieces just seem to occupy a different world, one more subdued and introspective. The brooches practically vibrate with meaning and, by being worn on the chest, invite communication. The hollowware's relative formality and functionality causes it to recede somewhat. That said, Young-kwan Jung's teapot and vase are dazzling spiral forms in silver that benefit from the graphic contrast of a blackwood handle. Kyung-hwan Kim's muscular vases in iron and brass exquisitely meld ancient and modern elements.

"Meditations in Metal" is an admirable introduction to the current Korean metals scene. Although American audiences may have grown accustomed to work that takes more risks and produces a more visceral reaction, there is a lot to experience here, particularly if you slow down and give the work time to reveal itself.

Katherine Ingraham is a metalsmith and writer living in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

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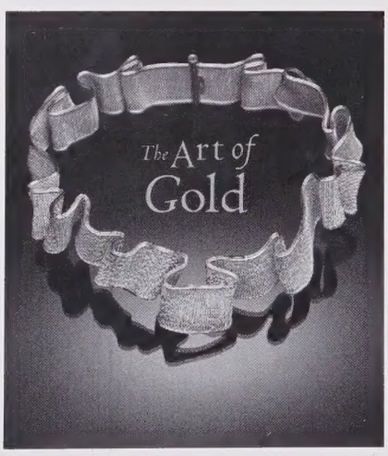

The SNAG Collection at SOFA Chicago

In conjunction with its annual resource table at SOFA Chicago, SNAG held a successful silent auction of The SNAG Collection, raising nearly $9,500 for its educational endowment and educational programming. The 2002 theme was "Body Geometrics: The Brooch," featuring 12 pieces. Contributing artists Boris Bally, Mary Lee Hu, Reiko Ishiyama, Micki Lippe, Sydney Lynch, Marcia Macdonald, Biba Schutz, Susan Kasson Sloan, Billie Jean Theide, Johan van Aswegan, Roberta and David Williamson, and Susan and Jeff Wise were all represented by galleries exhibiting at the show.

SNAG members Sandie Zilker and Edward McCartney coordinated the auction and designed the elegant display booth. In an ingenious twist on the brooch theme, Zilker and McCartney mounted oversized photocopies of each brooch on pin backs, which were then worn by executive director Dana Singer, past-president Micki Lippe, and other SNAG members on the show floor throughout the weekend.

SNAG Receives ACC Award of Distinction

Each year the American Crafts Council honors individuals and organizations representing the highest level of artistry, leadership, and service. In October 2002, the Society of North American Goldsmiths received the prestigious Aileen Osborn Webb Award of Distinction, in recognition of SNAG's contribution to the crafts field over the last 34 years. Micki Lippe, SNAG past-president, attended the ceremony in Portland, Oregon, to accept the award. The weekend's events began with the opening of an exhibition that showcased the work of all the ACC artists being honored, including SNAG member Harlan Butt, at Portland's Contemporary Crafts Gallery.

Metalsmith's Editor: A Wordsmith in Her Own Right

Two books authored by Suzanne Ramljak, editor of *Metalsmith*, were recently published: *United in Beauty: The Jewelry and Collectors of Linda MacNeil* (Schiffer Books) and *Crafting a Legacy: Contemporary Crafts at the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Rutgers University Press). In addition, Ramljak's essay, "Intimate Matters: Objects and Subjectivity," will be published in the forthcoming book *Objects and Meaning: Readings that Challenge the Norm* (Scarecrow Press), edited by Paula Owen and Anna Fariello.

"The Art of Gold" Exhibition Catalogue

A four-color catalogue will accompany SNAG's current "The Art of Gold" touring exhibition, managed by ExhibitsUSA. The catalogue is made possible by generous donations from ExhibitsUSA, the Art Jewelry Forum, The Webb Roven Foundation, the Richard and Kate Witkin Fund, SNAG, and a number of private collectors. Recognition goes to Donald Friedlich and Bruce Metcalf, who have personally shepherded the catalogue to publication. To purchase a catalogue call (630) 852-6385.

top to bottom

Collectors checking their bids at the SNAG Collection, SOFA Chicago.
Photo: David Barnes Photography

SNAG past-president Micki Lippe receiving the Award of Distinction from Bruce Guenther, chief curator, Modern and Contemporary Art, Portland Art Museum, Oregon.
Photo: Randy Boverman

Two recently authored publications by *Metalsmith* editor Suzanne Ramljak.

Catalogue cover of "The Art of Gold" traveling exhibition, organized by SNAG and toured by ExhibitsUSA.
Cover: Mary Lee Hu
Choker #83, 2002
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LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I thank Margo Mensing for her review of my exhibition, "Material Explorations: Wearable Objects of Non-Traditional Materials" (*Metalsmith*, Fall 2002). She clearly admired the objects included in this juried exhibition and provides astute analysis of many specific pieces. She speaks very enthusiastically of one of the six categories I used to organize the nearly 100 objects, also noting that another was weakly conceived; I pondered this myself while installing the show. Peer review ideally furnishes such reality checks, serving as a meter of public response and contributing to one's growing curatorial expertise. I write in the spirit of inviting an ongoing dialogue between reviewer and curator, particularly since, in this instance, I felt that important information about the exhibition was absent from the review.

A convenient point of entry is Ms. Mensing's observation that my choice to organize the objects in categories had "its drawbacks, in attempting to codify what could not be so regularly classified." I quote from the wall text I wrote to introduce the exhibition:

"Each category represents a trend in contemporary experimentation with adornment. However, the concerns they address often overlap or enhance one another, and each object in this exhibition can fit in more than one category. The exploration of materials asks us to re-consider why and how we come to value certain materials. It makes us aware that our bodies are sensing, meaning-giving instruments. Jewelry objects draw our attention to the ways in which artists, and we ourselves, are integral to the process of forming culturally significant objects from raw materials."

This is only a brief extract from the introductory wall text panels. In addition to the broad overview, I also prepared wall text to explain the focus of each of the six subcategories. Finally, though there was no illustrated catalogue, as Ms. Mensing notes, I wrote a sixteen-page gallery guide that provided information about each object. These entries discussed, for example, the artists' aesthetic choices and aims, any concepts and historical context relevant to their strategies, and/or how the objects tied into broader cultural issues.

Far from attempting to rigidly codify, my aim was to provide a framework in which the objects could be interpreted in complex ways. This was particularly important, given that the exhibition needed to serve audiences with quite traditional assumptions about jewelry—a point discussed with Ms. Mensing. The "Materials" theme emerged out of discussion with my co-organizer Chris Irick, a faculty member at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute School of Art. The exhibition was designed to introduce students in both the non-credit and two-year credit programs to the sophisticated concepts informing contemporary jewelry. Second, the general public in this isolated region of New York State needed context so they would not view these objects as simply bizarre. The target audiences needed education from the ground up, and I chose not to oversimplify the complex issues the objects invoked.

Like all curators, I developed my categories in response to the specific group of varied objects juried into the exhibition. I elected to provide a great deal of written material, not only for pedagogic and outreach purposes, but also because one so often leaves exhibitions wishing one knew more. I fully expected that many visitors would read selectively. Perhaps many would not read the text at all, preferring to enjoy the objects in their pure materiality. Nevertheless, through the text panels and gallery guide I made available the rich context of these objects' experimental vibrancy. These also gave the visitor models—and some of the responsibility—for interpreting the objects in fluid ways. I believe that, as a bonus, they revealed my curatorial choices and the rationale behind grouping certain objects together.

The unusual amount of textual material comprised a significant dimension of this exhibition. It would have been useful to have Ms. Mensing's opinion on its effectiveness. I'm sorry that it was ignored, instead of providing an opportunity to establish that link whereby curators can rely on reviewers to help them refine their strategies for presenting work in meaningful ways.

Tacey Rosolowski
Utica, New York

Margo Mensing replies:

Thanks to Tacey Rosolowski for pointing out to your readers her helpful and extensive didactic display that accompanied "Material Explorations." Certainly it is beneficial to museum visitors to have texts that explain the curatorial directive. However, Ms. Rosolowski and I have a difference of opinion on the objective of a review of an exhibition. I try to direct the reader's attention to the visual content of the works in the exhibition, describing as many as possible and setting them in a critical context, if there is one. "Material Explorations" definitely had one, as I remarked when quoting Ms. Rosolowski's curatorial premise: "The New Jewelry makes us understand that value is not an intrinsic, natural part of any material." I had no trouble finding enough to say about the quality, excitement, and material wonders of the dense and numerous objects in "Material Explorations."

Ms. Rosolowski apparently feels I slighted her curatorial efforts. No doubt this exhibition provided plenty of information for the reader, as I acknowledged several times in quoting the wall texts and guide. I enjoyed looking at and studying this ambitious exhibition. Many outstanding objects made it difficult to choose which to write about. The works stand on their own, inviting viewers to enjoy and ponder them. Even the populace in this "isolated region of New York State" could revel in the sometimes bizarre but always intriguing material explorations, whether or not they chose to read the wall texts.

Margo Mensing
Gansevoort, New York

Errata

The individual mistakenly referred to as Bravias Lattis in the article "Instruments of Imagination: The Jewelry of Gina Pankowski" (*Metalsmith*, Fall 2002), is actually Auguste Bravais (1811–1863), a French crystallographer known for his work on the geometry of "unit cells," or the simplest three-dimensional repeating units from which crystal structures are built.

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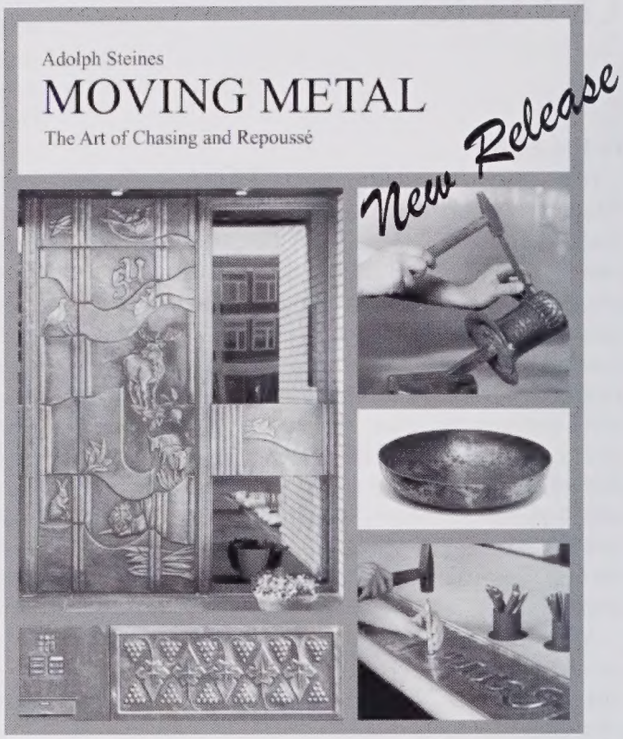

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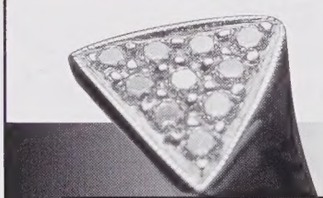

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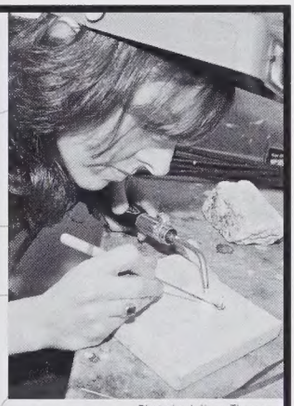

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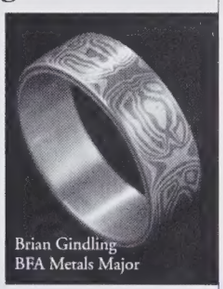

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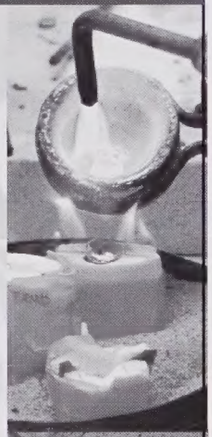

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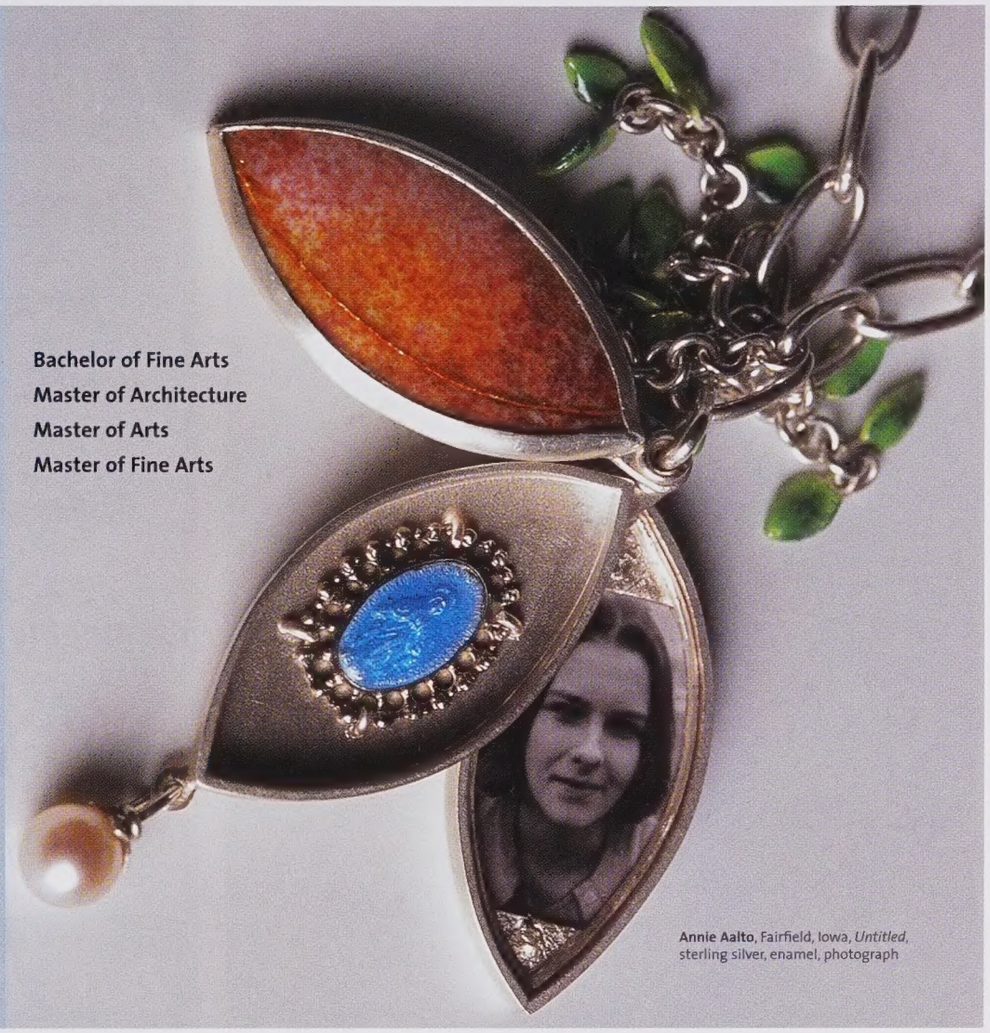

Annie Aalto, Fairfield, Iowa, *Untitled*, sterling silver, enamel, photograph

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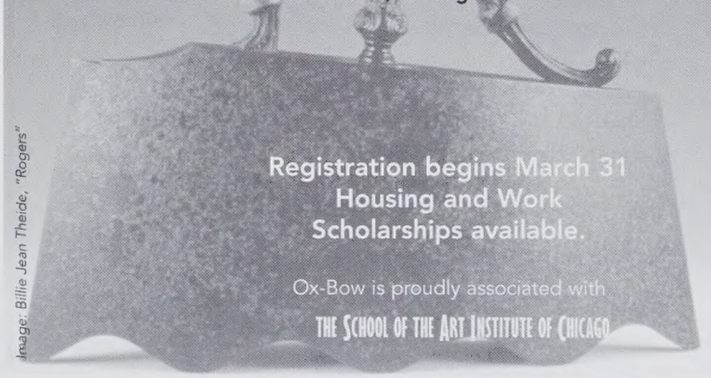

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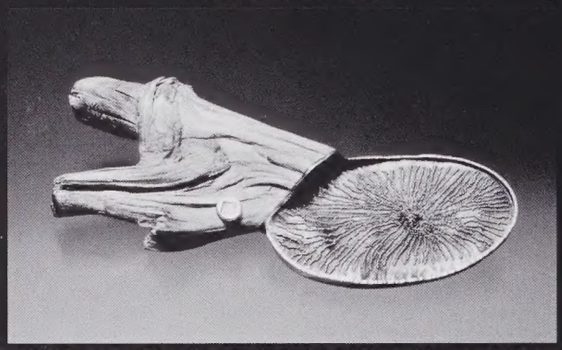

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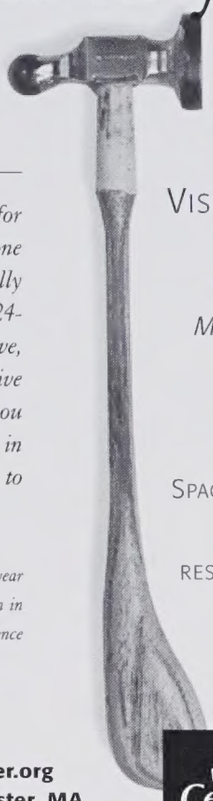

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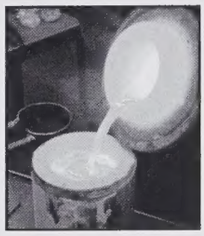

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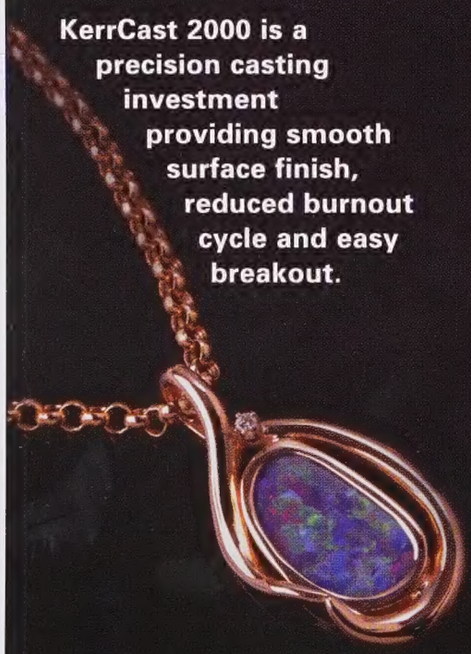

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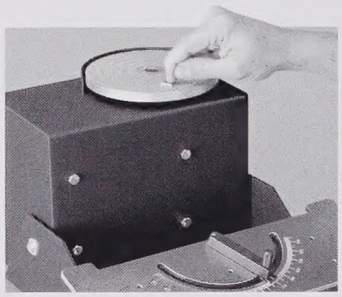

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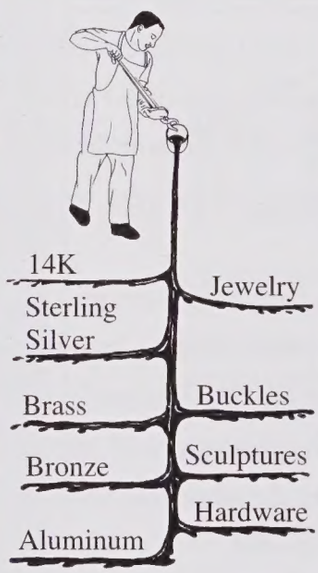

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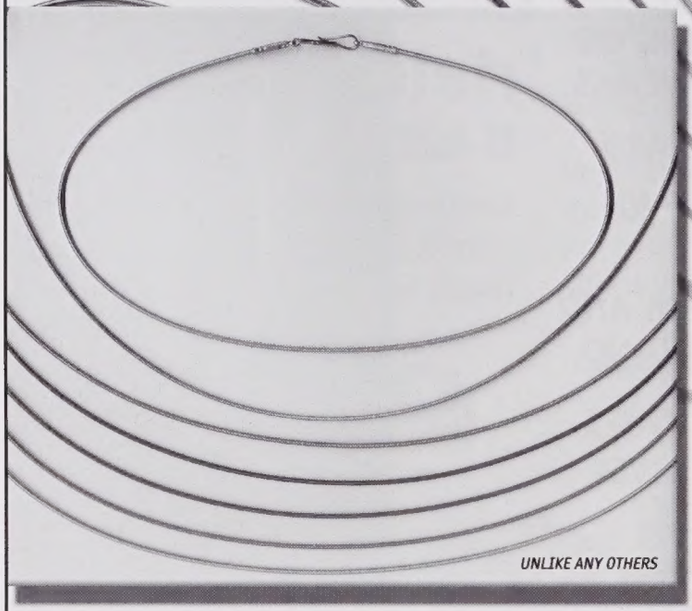

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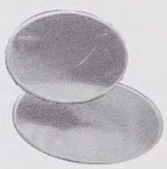

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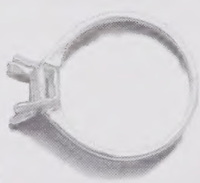

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Cup with Oval, 1998
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5 x 4 x 3"
Photo: Robert Storm

Biba Schutz
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
4 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 1 1/2"
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Stacked Basket, 2001
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Helen Shirk
Sustaining Sprit XXVII, 2000
copper, patina, colored pencils
6 x 23 x 23"

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
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platinum, 18k
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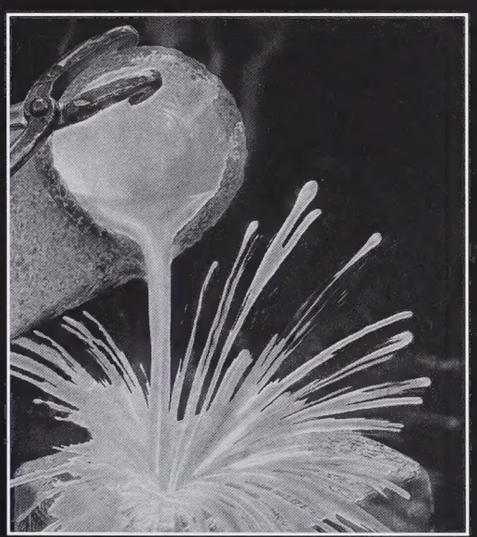

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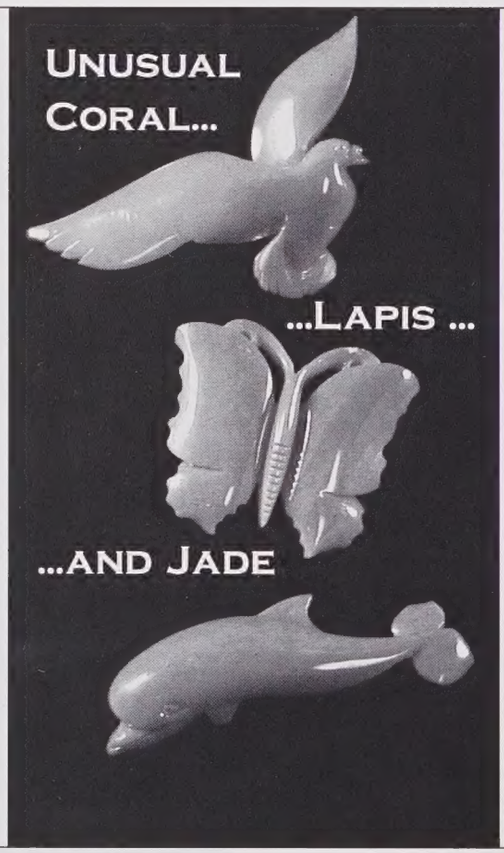

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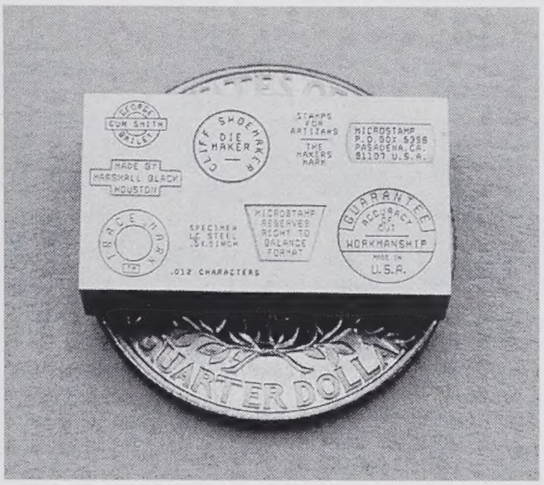

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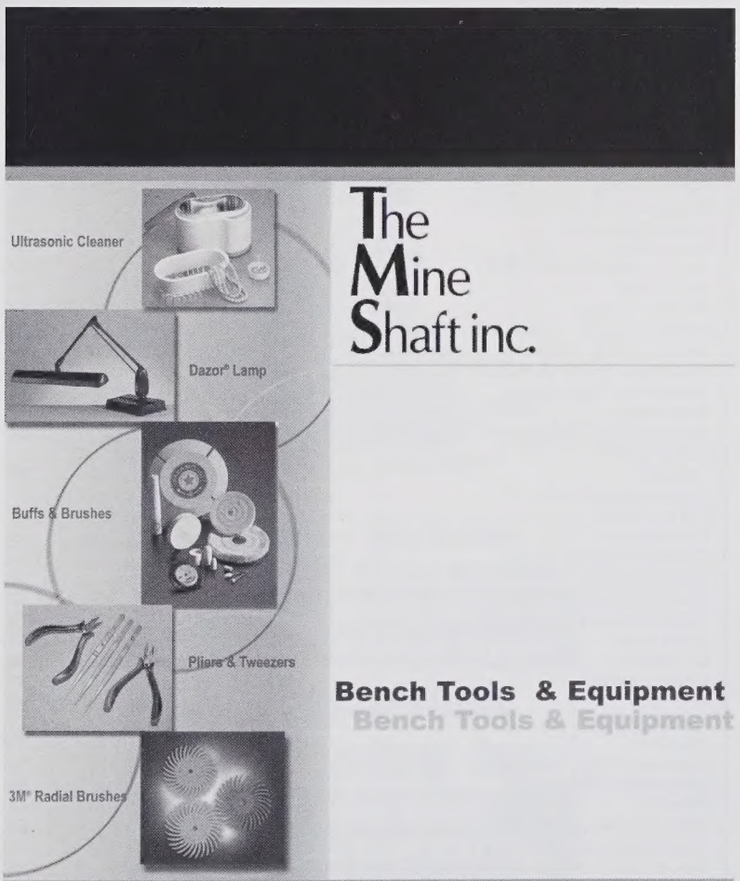

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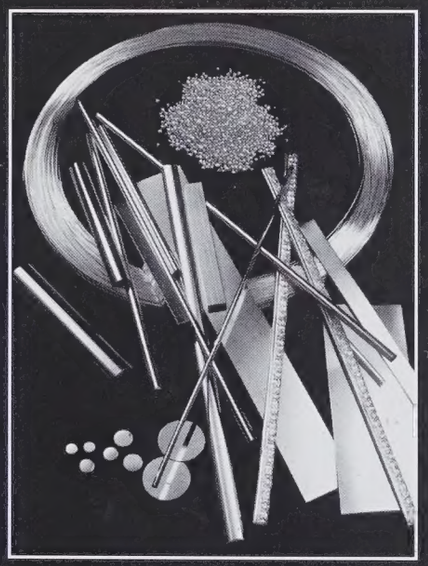

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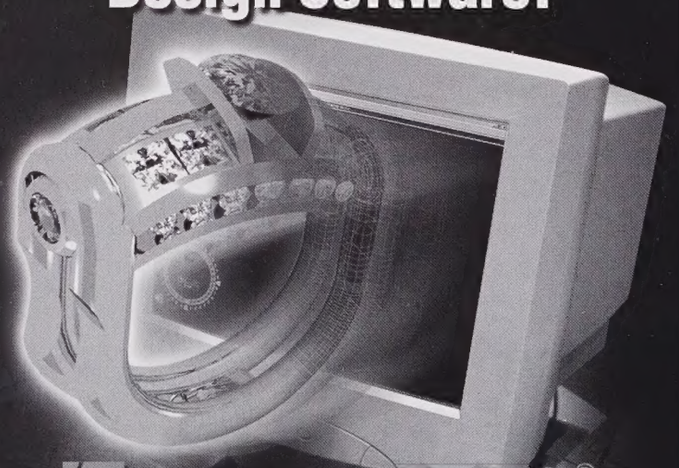

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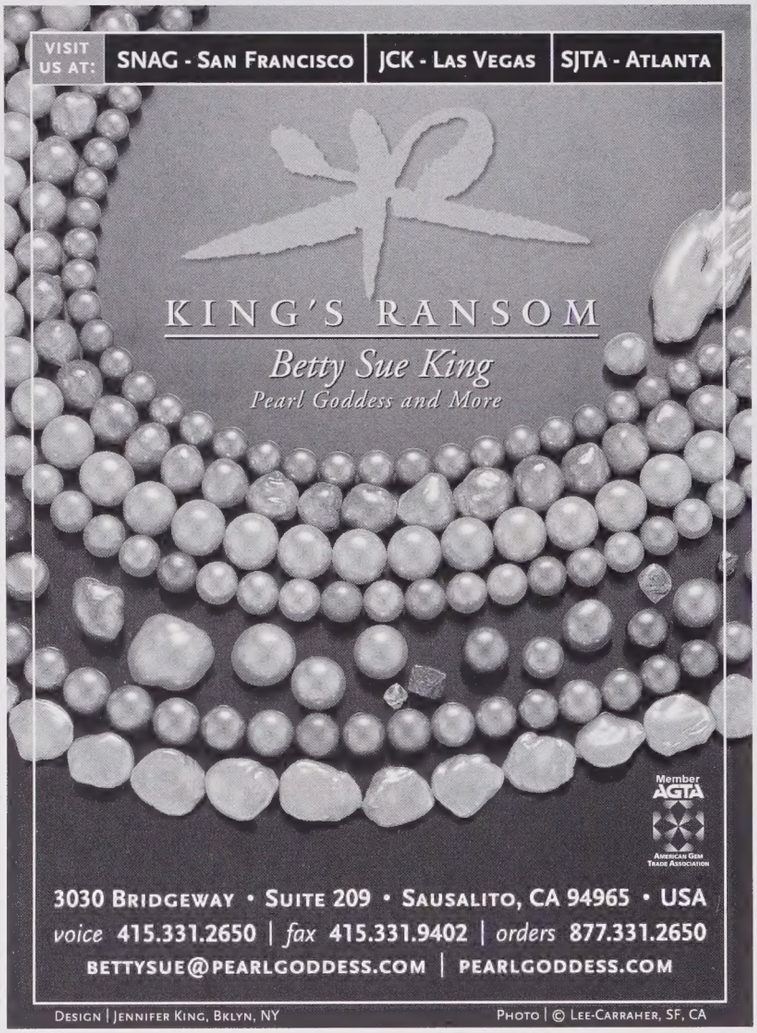

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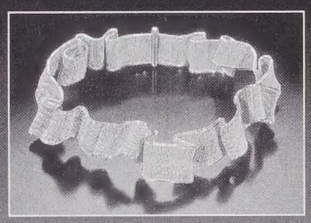
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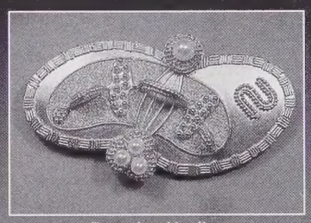
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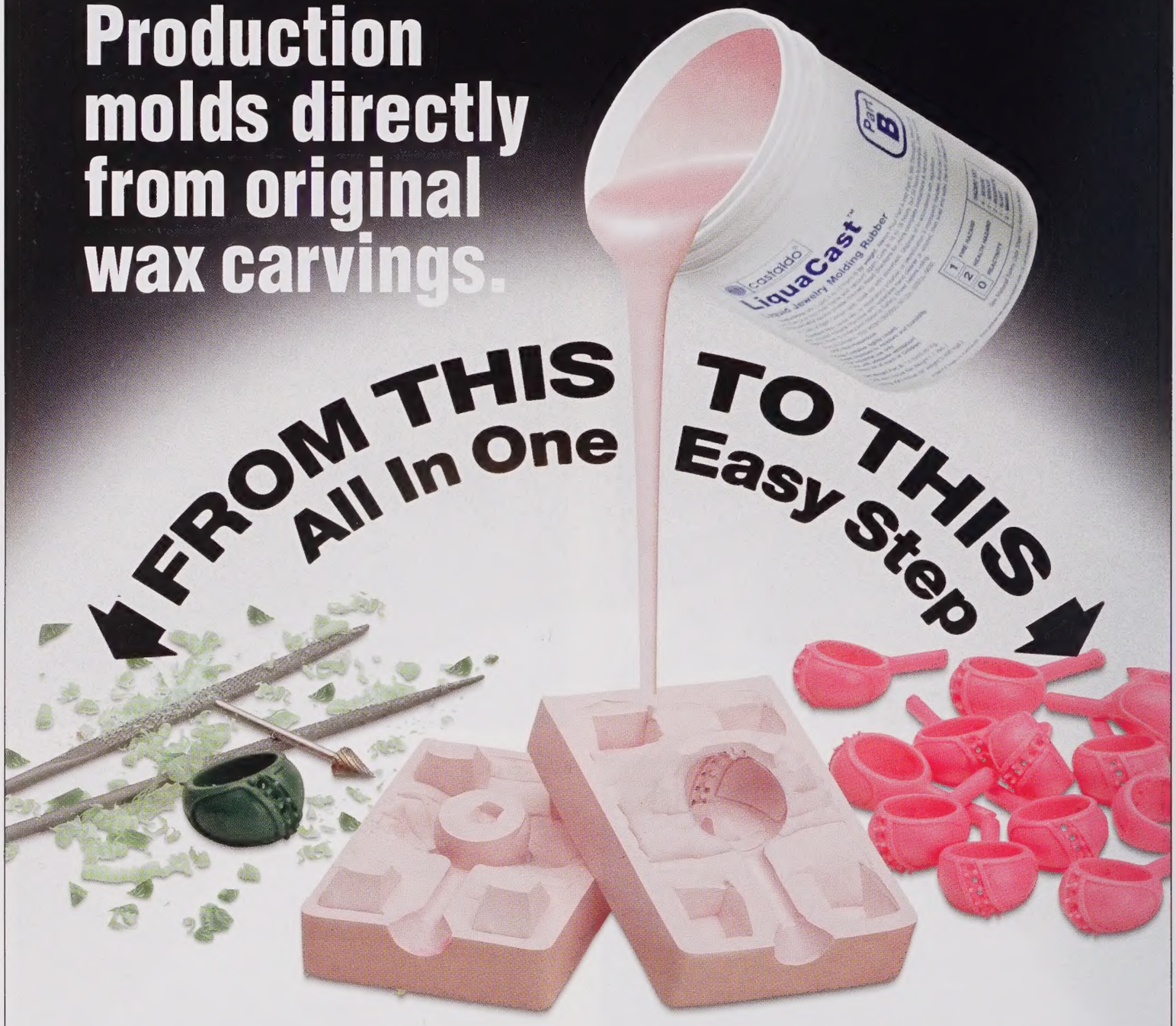

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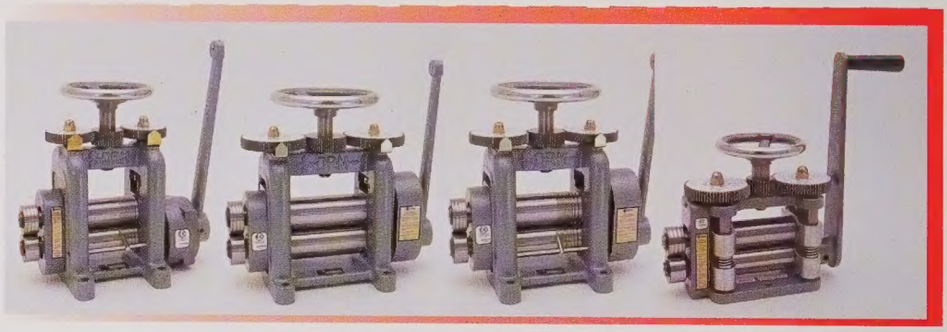

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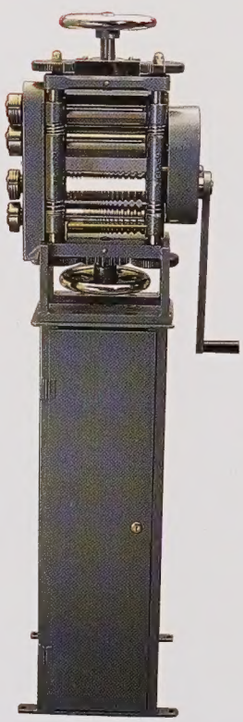

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